Pedagogue Supports, Role Perception and Collaborative Working Practices

A Faroese perspective

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Master's Thesis
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UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2013

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2013

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http://www.duo.uio.no/

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

This study focuses on the role of Pedagogue Supports in the Faroese kindergarten playroom. In particular it attempts to shed light on how they perceive their individual role and responsibilities supporting a child/ren with special needs. Additionally, the perceptions of co-workers on the role of the Support Pedagogue were also examined in an attempt to gauge how much they coincided or differed in opinion. It further explored the relationship between role perceptions, collaborative working practices and competency in the playroom.

A theoretical framework was developed based upon the ecological systems theory, role theory, cultural historical theory and the knowledge, skills and attitudes model, as well as published literature. Issues regarding, role expectations, role behaviours, collaborative working practices, co-worker influence on perception and collaboration were explored.

A qualitative approach was taken with qualitative interviews being conducted with six participants from two separate kindergartens. Of the six participants, three of the participants worked together in one kindergarten playroom, and the remaining three participants from the other kindergarten playroom. In each group of participants there was a representation of a Support, an Assistant and a playroom Supervisor who had all worked together for a period of time in which support was offered to a child/ren with special needs.

Data was analysed using a hermeneutic approach in which codes were attributed to the statements made by the participants. From these codes, themes emerged which were constantly related back to the original research questions and the theoretical framework. These themes included role expectations, responsibilities, competency in the playroom, collaborative working practices and inclusive practices.

The key findings of the study suggest that role perceptions play a major factor in competency building and collaboration within the playroom of not just the Support but the entire staff. It became evident that by fostering collaboration between the Support and his or her co-workers, fostered inclusive practice and ultimately greater inclusion for the child/ren with special needs.

Key words: Support Pedagogue, Role Perception, Collaborative working practices

Foreword

Like many of the students before me and no doubt, of the ones who will follow, this academic journey has been both challenging and rewarding. The challenges have made me stronger and more determined and rewards make me smile and fill me with pride.

My thanks and appreciation goes to the participants, who without their precious time and consideration I would not have seen the fruition of this study. Thanks are also extended to kindergarten Directors who welcomed me through their doors and were as excited and as enthusiastic as I was to conduct the study.

My supervisor Jorun Buli- Holmberg who guided, advised and encouraged me through the long and arduous writing process, and the Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo for the opportunity for me to broaden my horizons and meet some of the most fantastic people I feel privileged to know.

A special thanks to my brother Jed and my dear friend Jacquie for coaching me, advising me and giving me the support I needed in both my academic and personal life.

Thanks also to the wonderful support network of friends I found in Oslo, who made my life a richer and happier experience being so far away from home. I will always carry you in my heart.

Lastly to the loves of my life Poul Erik, Kaj, Rana and Ari, you sacrificed two years for me. Throughout this journey you were and still are the lights that shine at the end of my tunnel.

Natascha Malang Johannesen

Oslo, 2013

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”

Helen Keller

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1 Introduction

Pedagogue Supports are integral members of staff in many kindergarten playrooms around the country. Their use in playrooms indicates a strong desire by Municipal councils to offer the opportunity for many children and their families the right to be accepted and be a part of their local communities. It is a moral and ethical step towards creating an equal society, where the needs of children are satisfied. The use of Pedagogue Supports is recognition that children have an inherent right, to grow, develop and socialise with their peers, neighbours, families and friends in their local communities. This is especially important in such a small and geographically isolated society as the Faroe Islands.

The use of Pedagogue Supports in the playroom attempts to equalise services of childhood care and education for all children especially those with special or particular needs in kindergartens, by providing an 'extra pair of hands, eyes and ears' so that no child is forgotten. In order to utilise their potential strengths, it is important for playrooms to create an inclusive workplace that embraces the Pedagogue Supports through collaborative working practices.

After working several years as a Pedagogue Support in Australian schools and working alongside Pedagogue Supports in a Faroese Kindergarten, I became aware of several issues that impacted upon the way in which they were able to undertake their job duties. One issue was the perception of Pedagogue Supports about themselves and the perceptions of others about that support role in the kindergarten playroom and questioned if that had any bearing on collaborative working practices.

1.1 Purpose

This study focuses on the role of Pedagogue Supports in the Faroese kindergarten playroom. In particular it attempts to shed light on how they perceive their individual role and responsibilities supporting a child/ren with special needs. Additionally, the perceptions of co-workers on the role of the Support Pedagogue are also examined in an attempt to gauge how much they coincide or differ in opinion.

It further explores the relationship between role perceptions, collaborative working practices and competency in the playroom.

1.2 Research Question

1. How do Pedagogue Supports perceive their role in relation to task and responsibilities in the Kindergarten playroom?
2. How do co-workers perceive the role of Pedagogue Supports in relation to tasks and responsibilities in the Kindergarten playroom?
3. What impact does role perception have on collaborative working practices in the Kindergarten playroom?

1.3 Research Problem

The argument for inclusion relates not only to the child with special needs but also to the way in which the Pedagogue Support can maintain a meaningful work relationship with their colleagues. The success of which a Pedagogue Support is able to undertake his or her work is therefore dependent upon many differing factors, not at least an understanding of their own role and responsibility within the playroom.

To date there are no uniform guidelines offered to kindergartens regarding the roles and responsibilities of a Support. Each municipal kindergarten works from a set of work guidelines that incorporates the legal requirements as stated by the national Day-care Services Law (2006). Whilst law dictates certain legal requirements each kindergarten must adhere to, kindergartens themselves develop their own working philosophy and guidelines for its staff members. Therefore the expectations for a Pedagogue Support can differ from one kindergarten to the next.

This research recognises the fact there is a discrepancy in working guidelines for Supports around the Faroe Islands. It will attempt to focus on the perceptions that individual Supports and their work colleagues experience in view of the working relationships they share.

1.4 Significance of the study

The research conducted on Supports has been significant, with studies being conducted as far back as the early 1990's (Centre on Disability and Community Inclusion, 2013). However this research to date has focused mainly on Supports working in primary and secondary education (Bourke, 2009; Chopra, Sandoval- Lucero, Aragon, Bernal, Berg De Balderas & Carroll, 2004; Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer & Doyle, 2001, Howard & Ford, 2007; Takala, 2007; Travers, 2006). Studies conducted in early educational settings such as kindergarten are few however the exceptions include research conducted by Lieber, Beckman, Hanson, Janko, Marquart, Horn & Odom (1997), Hughes & Valle- Riestra, (2008), Jones, Ratcliff, Sheehan and Hunt (2012), Ratcliff, Jones, Vaden, Sheehan & Hunt (2011), Sandberg & Ottoson, (2010) and Tompkins, Ratcliff, Jones, Vaden, Hunt, & Chase (2012).

Many of the issues Supports face in the primary and secondary education systems are also experienced by Supports working in early education. However unlike schools, kindergartens around the world differ in their style and focus on education (Moss, 2010). Therefore the uniqueness of this study not only lies in the area of early education but in a country where no research regarding Supports in kindergartens has been found. Concession is given by the researcher that studies may exist, however none have been found to be published in English.

1.4.1 Kindergartens in the Faroe Islands

Education on an equal status as their peers is the legal right of all children in the Faroe Islands. As such, every child in the Faroes has the right to choose and attend their local kindergarten in their home village. Each family has the right to expect that the necessary measures are employed by each Municipal council to allow their child to participate and become involved in the daily life and activities of that local kindergarten.

Whilst municipal councils are not required by law to provide and operate kindergartens in their districts, it has become a citizen service that almost all of the councils have undertaken in the Faroes. All Kindergartens and day-care services are guided by the Day-care Services Law (2006) which strictly regulates how services are provided to children and their families. The kindergartens in the Faroe Islands, similar to many of its Northern neighbours - Denmark,

Iceland, Norway and Sweden (Kamerman, 2000; Moss, 2010), offers a two pronged service of childcare and early childhood education with children from the ages of six months to six years in attendance.

As an increasing amount of children enter the kindergarten and day-care system in the Faroe Islands, early education professionals have also needed to develop a greater awareness and keen observational skills in order to identify the children requiring extra assistance with either social or physical interaction or those experiencing developmental difficulties.

One service that has been created to assist educational professionals within the last few years is Námfrøðiliga Stuðul Ráðgeving (NSR). It is an advisory board for all children and youth services within kindergartens, schools and allied health services, offering professional advice from a multidisciplinary team of Psychologists, Pedagogues and Speech therapists.

Children identified as having a need for extra pedagogical support, whether it is physical, intellectual or social are allocated 'support hours' that are approved and funded through each municipal council in which the child resides. Kindergartens then allocate the 'support hours' towards the total amount of staffing hours in the playroom that the child in question attends. Support hours are utilised by either employing an extra person to fulfil the position as a Pedagogue Support for 'one on one' support to the child, as a Pedagogue Support 'supporting' the entire classroom with no particular child, or the support hours are absorbed by the existing staff in the playroom (staff work the additional allocated hours onto their existing hours).

1.4.2 Pedagogue Supports in the Faroe Islands

As long as kindergartens have been operating in the Faroes, Supports have been employed in playrooms. However the history of kindergartens in the Faroes is relatively brief with many being built within the last ten to fifteen years.

The use of Supports in kindergartens around the Faroes is widespread, with exact numbers unknown. This may be due to the turnover of Supports (Supports are generally employees of the kindergarten, taking the position. Once the contract ends, they resume their regular position within the playroom); the temporary nature of the contracts for support hours (each contract period extends for either six months or one year, with an option to renew after

reviewal); or even the fact that confidentially protocols may prevent Supports identifying themselves or other Supports as being employed in their present position.

The Ministry for Culture and Education employs Pedagogue Supports in schools nationwide; however their position is not as tenuous as the Supports working in kindergartens. Pedagogue Supports in these positions are under the supervision of Sernám, an assessment, counselling and case management service for children and youth under the department for the Ministry of Culture and Education. Sernám follows a standard protocol when employing the Supports (Landsskúlafyristingin, 1992) and is further responsible for providing information and training opportunities to the Pedagogue Supports.

There have been many negative connotations associated with the job title of 'Support' denoting a lack of formal education, lower social status in the workplace and lower skill set (Bedford, Jackson & Wilson, 2008). However in the Faroes, the title 'Support' has no bearing on educational status, as both qualified Pedagogues and Pedagogue Assistants work in that position. In the Faroese language, a Support is simply called a 'Stuðul', translated directly into English as 'support'. Throughout this text, the terms 'Pedagogue Support' and 'Support' will be used interchangeably.

1.5 Terminology

Role and responsibilities

This research explores the role perception and responsibilities of a group of workers through their own eyes and the eyes of their co-workers. The term 'role' in this research, is based upon an understanding that is grounded in the experiences of the participant being interviewed. 'Role and responsibilities' in this respect are seen as the *"function assumed or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation"* (http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/role?q=role). As described further in Chapter 2, the roles and responsibilities of Supports are often undefined (Giangreco, et. al., 2001) and can be subjective according who is being asked.

This research is based upon the premise that the way individuals perceive themselves relates directly to the way they conduct themselves in the playroom. The role and responsibilities of the Pedagogue Support are not in question throughout the research process, but rather

explored to see the extent at which they influence collaborative working practices and ultimately inclusion of the child with special needs.

Collaboration

Collaboration is the interactive process that is created when members of a team work together for the greater good of the unit. Rainforth and York –Barr (1997, p. 18) believe collaborative practices involves "*individuals with varied life perspectives and experiences join[ing] together in a willingness to share resources, responsibility and the rewards in creating inclusive and educational programs and environments…"* Through collaboration individuals share a common philosophy, ownership and responsibility for the children, communicate with one another, share roles, create stability in the relationship and provide support to one another (Lieber, Wolery, Horn, Tschantz, Beckman & Hanson, 2002).

According to del Rio and Álvarez (2002), meaningful collaboration benefits both parties engaged in the activity, through shared interest, motivation, satisfaction and achievement. Lieber, et. al. (1997) strongly believes collaboration between staff members leads to inclusion not only for the children, but also for staff members. Rainforth and York- Barr (1997) subscribe to the same ideas, adding that collaboration should not be seen as seeking assistance from others, but as part of a continual learning process.

The phrase collaborative working process throughout the paper is a reflection of this interactive process in which knowledge is sought, shared and expanded for both personal and professional benefit.

Competency

The concept of competency has been defined in numerous ways, however this paper will use the definition suggested by Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005). Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005, p. 39) understand competency as the *"combination of knowledge, skills and social competences that are necessary for particular occupations"*.

Competency is seen to be achieved when collaborative working practices become the working ethos within the playroom. With this understanding a Support can achieve competency through shared and mediated activity, knowledge, supervision and mentorship, and working

as an integral team member in the playroom. The concept of competency is further explored in Chapter 2.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured into four main chapters. Chapter 2 begins by providing a theoretical framework for this research. In the first part of Chapter 2, the reader is introduced to the Ecological Systems theory and Role theory. Some of the key issues regarding the impact of co-workers, role expectations, role behaviours and work attitudes on role perception are explored. In addition it describes how aspects of the two theories can be combined to create a balanced view of role perception.

The second part of Chapter 2 describes collaborative working practices based upon the Cultural Historical Activity theory (CHAT). It explores practical examples of application and describes ways in which collaboration may present challenges in the playroom. Practical ways to facilitate the collaborative process are also investigated.

The final section of Chapter 2 looks at a competency based model, the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes model (KSA). It describes how awareness to these three components in a collaborative working partnership leads to increased competency for not just the Support, but each individual member of the collaborative team. This section delves into strategies that can be employed in facilitating increased competencies in team members.

Chapter 3 describes the design, sampling of participants, data collection procedures, quality and rigor factors and the ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter 4 presents the findings that were produced by the research in relation to the research questions. Five main themes are explored throughout this chapter.

The last chapter, Chapter 5 discusses the key findings in relation to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 and the initial research questions. It highlights the implications for the Faroe Islands and offers considerations for future research regarding Supports working in Kindergartens.

2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide a framework of reference by looking into theories and relevant research related to role perception and cooperative working practices of Pedagogue Supports and their co-workers.

The research questions focused upon the Support working in the kindergarten playroom. To place that into context, both Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory and the Cultural Historical theory (Cole, 1996) were utilised as both were concerned with the didactic nature of the relationship between the individuals and their immediate environment.

One of the underlying goals of early childhood care and education in the Faroes is of inclusion for all the children in attendance. The theories and literature explored in this chapter regarding role perception, collaboration and competency form a sound basis for inclusive practice in the playroom.

2.1 Ecological Systems Theory

To view the Support as an individual entity with no influence on his or her environment is to see the Support working in a vacuum isolated from their work colleagues and the children in the playroom. That is a situation that simply does not exist.

Drawing upon the philosophical guidelines of the ecological systems theory, an individual's 'role' can be placed into an overall context. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) key assumption in the ecological systems theory is one of interconnectedness. An individual exerts influence upon their surrounding environment and in turn the surrounding environment influences the individual with equal force.

Bronfenbrennur uses the imagery of concentric circles to describe the system, with each circle representing a setting. These settings begin with the inner microsystem, followed by the mesosystem, exosystem and the macrosystem (1979). Key to the ecological systems theory is reciprocity in equal measure, in which the effects within one setting reverberate *"with equal force and consequence to linkages between settings"* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7).

Bronfenbrenner applies the term 'ecological transitions' to describe the triadic principle which he relates to the relationship an individual has to their setting. He states the *"capacity of a setting…to function effectively as a context for development is seen to depend on the existence and nature of social interconnections between settings, including joint participation, communication and the existence of information in each setting about the other"* (1979, p.6)

To understand how the concept of role can be attributed to the Support, one needs to accept that every individual in every situation assumes themselves, or is attributed by others a role, in which they either consciously or unconsciously adhere to. This research focused on how Supports perceived their role within the playroom and in turn how co-workers perceived that role. This perception or preconceived notion of what role the Support should 'play' ultimately impacts upon the collaborative nature of the working partnerships in the playroom.

2.1.1 Taking an Ecological systems view to 'Role'

For the Support, focusing on the intricacies of the microsystem can assist in explaining how they develop their role identity. As Bronfenbrennur (1979, p. 22) describes it, the microsystem is a *"pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics".* Bronfenbrennur (1979, p.85) defines a role as *"a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society and of others in relation to that person".*

Within that statement, Bronfenbrennur points out that the individual is not only influenced by others or the situation that surrounds them, but has a reciprocal influence on those people and the situation. The ecological systems theory is based upon a principle of interconnectedness,

> *" a theoretical conception of the environment extending beyond the behaviour of individuals to encompass functional systems both within and between settings, systems that can be modified and expanded"* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7).

A person's background, experience and knowledge all play a part in influencing the way that person will interact and impact upon the system in which they find themselves (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Bronfenbrennur believes that all this impacts upon the development and behaviour of the individual within that setting. *"Roles have magic like power to alter how a person is treated, how she acts, what she does and thereby even what she thinks and feels. The*

principle applies not only to the developing person but to the others in her world" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 6).

Bronfenbrenner goes on to say that *"active engagement in, or even mere exposure to, what others are doing often inspires the person to undertake similar activities on her own"* (1979, p. 6), hence changing their own self-perception either in what they are doing, or the way in which they view themselves. *"Placing people in different roles, even in the same setting can radically influence the kinds of activities and relations in which they engage and they presumably alter the course of their development*". (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.84)

"It is the embeddedness of roles in this larger context that gives them their special power to influence and even to compel- how a person behaves in a given situation, the activities she engages in, and the relations that become established between that person and others present in the setting" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 86).

2.1.2 The impact of Co-workers on Roles

Following the Ecological systems theory, co-workers play an important role in affecting the way in which a Support perceives their own role. Coexisting and working within the microsystem, the Support is affected and influenced by the individuals working with them on a day to day basis.

Research conducted by Chiaburu and Harrison (2008, p. 1083), on relationships between co-workers highlighted the significance that co-workers provide and influence in their colleague's *"individual role perceptions, work attitudes, withdrawal and effectiveness"*. In particular, they suggested that *"co-workers can provide different valences of influence: positive (social support) and negative (antagonism) to their colleagues"*, essentially defining the social workplace environment (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008, p. 1083).

Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) describe co-workers as role senders influencing Supports own perception of their role through role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload. In this way, Supports are mentored by co-workers with advice about prioritising and organising of the Support's tasks or responsibilities. Additionally it was noted that co-workers can mentor through the use of emotional support and encouragement. Giangreco, et. al. (2001, p. 486) concur, stating *"the extent of respect, appreciation and acknowledgement of [Supports] that*

contributes to job satisfaction is reflected in many other factors such as compensation, role clarification, training opportunities, supervision and support". Giangreco, et. al. (2001, p. 495) believe that when this takes place, Supports feel valued and respected and ultimately not taken advantage of *"since there is individually agreed upon role clarity"*.

2.2 Role theory

As individual self- perception was explored in this study, 'role theory' can provide a useful insight into the assumptions of individuals related to their own experiences.

According to Biddle (1986, p. 68), Role theory is

> *"a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristic social behaviours, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants and scripts or expectations for behaviour that are understood by all and adhered to by performers"*.

Based upon a sociological and social psychological viewpoint, it characterises patterns of behaviour for individuals within certain contexts and situations using five central perspectives, those being functional, symbolic interactionist, structural, and organisational and cognitive role therapy (Biddle, 1986; Broderick, 1999).

As Biddle (1986) explains, central to this collective theory is the assumption of role expectations by theorists as norms, beliefs and attitudes. He goes on to state these expectations are *"learned through experience, and that persons are aware of the expectations they hold"* (Biddle, 1986).

2.2.1 Role expectations and behaviours

Through their research Dierdorff and Morgenson (2007) found that role expectations shape an individual's behaviour. Theorists use the term 'consensuses referring to the belief of individuals about what their role thus influencing their role behaviour. The concept of consensus stresses *that "such persons know what they should do, and all persons in the system can be counted on to support those norms with sanctions"* (Biddle, 1986, p. 76). Following on from Biddle's (1986) belief that expectations develop from an individual's experience in a particular environment, Dierdorff and Morgeson (2007, p. 1228) go on to say, that *"judgments of work role requirements are an essential component of role enactment*

because they explicitly represent what people believe to be crucial to the performance of their work roles".

Dierdorff and Morgeson (2007) identified several factors that affect role expectations and role behaviour. These included work attitudes; leadership; personality; job autonomy; task engagement; work experience and ability. In studies generated by several researchers (Butt & Lowe, 2011; Daniels & McBride, 2001; Giangreco, Sutter & Doyle, 2010; Ghere & York-Barr, 2007; Howard & Ford, 2007; Lieber, et. al., 2002; Patterson, 2006; Travers, 2006) a reflection of these factors can be seen. Dierdorff and Morgenson (2007, p. 1229) suggest the degree to which *"role expectations are shared or consistently held across role holders on these different types of work role requirements is likely to vary"* and can especially be seen when the role is shared by a number of others.

Research conducted by Butt and Lowe (2011) identified role confusion in Supports, when responsibilities and expectations were not clarified. This confusion relates in particular to the varied tasks undertaken by Supports, especially those working in classroom situations (Butt & Lowe, 2011; Howard & Ford, 2007; Ghere & York-Barr, 2007). Butt and Lowe (2011) suggest the lack of clarity in role definition also leads to the differing perspectives and expectations that co-workers, Supervisors and Supports have on the role of the Support. Ghere and York- Barr (2007) noted in their research, that confusion in role expectations can cause uncertainty and can lead to stress and a high staff turnover rate. Shyman (2010) supports this claim, maintaining that role conflict and lack of clarity contribute significantly to the stress and emotional exhaustion experienced by Supports.

When positive expectations of role are held in high regard by one party but not reciprocated by the other party it can also lead to disillusionment and role confusion. Chopra, et. al. (2004) in their research explored the role of the Support as a 'connector' between the school and the family, teacher and child and child to child. In interviewing both Supports and Teachers, they found that Supports felt they were undervalued considering the role they played as a liaison in the classroom. Chopra et. al. (2004) found that this was based upon a level of mistrust from Teacher's expectations and Support's expectations of responsibilities that were often unspecified but were either expected of or assumed by the Support.

Rutherford (2011) found that the role of 'connector' was at times counterproductive, with Supports being seen as facilitating exclusion as opposed to inclusion. Children with special

needs were unwittingly separated from their peers or singled out as needing 'extra' attention. In addition Supports represented a physical barrier for Teacher/student interaction, with some teachers minimising contact and responsibility (Rutherford, 2011; Takala, 2007).

Whilst there were obvious negatives as reported by the previously mentioned researchers, Giangreco, et. al. (2001) identified six themes in their research which related to the feelings of respect, appreciation and acknowledgment of Supports when their contribution was considered favourably. These included; monetary signs and symbols of appreciation, compensation, entrusted with responsibility, being listened to and supervision and support.

2.2.2 Work Attitudes

Dierdorff and Morgenson (2007, p. 1228) suggest *"clarity of work role requirements has been associated with important individual and organisational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance"*. Downing, Ryndak and Clark (2000) observed in their research, a lack of clarity can result in Supports feeling isolated and uncertain. In addition, Howard and Ford (2007) found that without clarification, difficulties and frustration were associated with perceived expectations by the Supports. In their opinion, specific job descriptions and skill expectations were paramount not only for the personal satisfaction of the Supports but also in aiding them to fulfil both their legal and ethical responsibilities (Ghere & York- Barr, 2007; Howard & Ford, 2007).

Simple terminology or even attitudes of others can cast a negative pallor on how Supports view review their role expectations. Bach, Kessler & Heron (2006) and Kessler, Bach & Heron (2007) reported negativity and a social cast system that exists with the term 'support', suggests that educational staff look down upon Pedagogue Supports deeming them lesser on the social hierarchy and therefore of less educational value in the classroom. Mehan (1993, p. 241) describes this as the politics of representation in which there is *"competition over the meaning of ambiguous events, people and objects in the world"*. He states, *"Each mode of representation defines the person making the representation and constitutes the group of people, and so does in a different way"* (Mehan, 1993, 242). He attributes this also to the way in which we use labels in schools or in this case kindergartens, when we attempt to define children or even groups of people into finite roles e.g. Supports, Assistants etc. Using a 'social constructionist' perspective, Mehan (1993, p. 264) maintains, *"Institutional officials speak with a technical vocabulary grounded in professional expertise. Ordinary people speak*

in a common vernacular grounded in personal experience". This can be likened to education over experience, highlighting further the social hierarchy noted by Bach, Kessler & Heron (2006) and Burgess and Shelton Mayes (2007).

However, in contrast Lieber, et. al. (1997) research, it was reported that administrative encouragement towards Supports influenced and increased Supports' own confidence in their work abilities. Jerwood (1991) and Lacey (2001) found that Pedagogue Supports attached to a classroom than a particular child were more positive about their positions and had clearer definitions about their individual roles than those attached to a particular child. Teachers and students alike saw the Support as an additional asset to be used positively rather than as a hindrance to the educational experience.

2.2.3 Criticisms to Role theory

While Role theory has been criticised by some researchers (Jackson, 1998; Turner & Shepherd, 1999) as relying on an individual's conformity, certain aspects can utilised and witnessed as existing, regardless of the feminist or sociological viewpoints. The theory has been criticised as seeing individuals as needing to conform to societal norms and expectations and the expectations that others will also adhere to these unspoken norms (Jackson, 1998). Jackson (1998) believes the key expectation of the Role theory is one social integration, in that individuals are socially pressured to adhere to the 'norms' of society through conformity.

When conformity does not occur we see the emergence of role conflict which is manifested through role ambiguity and role overload and role insecurity (Biddle, 1986; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Dierdorff & Morgenson, 2007; Jackson, 1998). It has also been argued that this in turn creates 'false universal standards of behaviour' presenting a model of behaviour that individuals may find impossible to achieve and reinforcing society's views of 'deviancy' (Jackson, 1998, Wolfensberger, 2000).

2.3 Creating a balance between the cultural historic theory and role theory

There can be no denying about whether the sociological precept of role theory is valid or not or whether individual's behaviour reflects this principle; however we can choose how we utilize the insight that it can offer.

It is important to be aware that whilst role theory can be used to highlight a sociological understanding into individualised behaviour with regards to the societal norms, it can be counterbalanced by taking a view of the cultural historical theory. Understanding that individuals are not created or exist within a vacuum and not disregarding the knowledge that outside influences structure and impact upon the way individuals behave, Role theory can offer a balanced insight into individual behaviour.

2.4 Collaborative working practices

Essential to any workplace situation is the interaction that takes place amongst co-workers. Collaboration between members of staff, staff with children and parents results in joint educational goals being reached and a positive nurturing learning environment for all concerned. With that in mind, one sees the importance of collaborative partnerships between the Pedagogue Support and his /her co-workers and parents, and how they impact significantly upon the child with special needs. Højholt (2011) believes collaborative partnerships are particularly important in creating the 'practical developmental possibilities' for children in the playroom, especially those with special needs.

Viewing collaboration through the conceptual eyes of the Cultural Historical Activity Theory, allows one to value the uniqueness of individuals and the knowledge and skills they bring to the work partnership. In a collaborative partnership, the Support, the Supervisor, the Assistants, and the parents all have the ability to contribute to a fruitful working relationship and positive learning environment for the child. Within a collaborative partnership, the contribution of all members is valued, encouraged and sought.

2.4.1 Cultural Historical Activity Theory and the playroom

As a second generation perspective of the sociocultural theory, the Cultural historical activity theory or CHAT sees joint participant of individuals as providing mediation. Individuals learn through being exposed to new experiences and that knowledge is transferred and applied in different situations and environments, eventually passing on to subsequent generations (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2001; Reuda & Monzó, 2002; Rogoff, 2003; Wells & Claxton, 2002) .The key principles as described by Wells and Claxton (2002) include cultural relativism,

meaningful collaborative activity, appropriation and transformation, guided participation, recognition of diversity, smart machines and absent others.

In particular by focusing on meaningful collaborative activity, recognising diversity and guided participation as meditative processes, we can highlight the collaborative working processes that take place in the kindergarten playroom. Working together sharing knowledge, problem solving, responsibility and common goals through meaningful active collaboration leads to the skill and knowledge acquisition (Wells & Claxton, 2002).

Meaningful collaborative activity does not require that individuals are all in agreement with the same opinion, beliefs or values, but rather are accepting and seeing the value that each individual is able to offer to the working process. Højholt (2011, p. 74) believes we need to *"search [in others in order to] create possibilities for contributions in concrete communities of relevance"*. Therefore we need to look for the possibilities for people to be able to contribute. According to Wells and Claxton (2002, p. 5) it is important there be a *"willingness to attempt to understand the perspectives of others. But difference and disagreement are also valuable"*. Sindelar (1995 cited in Lieber et. al. 1997) notes, *"there are many different ways to collaborate and individual teachers may assume very different roles"* and different stances as part of this collaborative process.

Guided participation as termed by Rogoff (2003) is learning through modelling, observation, participation. It plays an active part in the development of work strategies and activities for not only children in the playroom, but can be applied to staff development and learning. In the playroom less experienced staff members learn 'on the job' from more experienced staff using the concept of zone of proximal development or 'ZPD' (Engeström, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). New skills are internalised and applied into different working situations.

2.4.2 Applying CHAT to collaborative practices in the playroom

Collaborative teams are important in any kindergarten and even more so when children with special needs are to be included in the daily life of a playroom (Odom et. al. 1999, cited in Hunt, Soto, Maler, Liboiron and Bae, 2004). The inclusion of the child with special needs is dependent and a reflection upon how well staff members, including the Supports connect and

work collaboratively with each other. As Vygotsky (1978) maintains children learn by example and by showing them, it enables them to transfer that learning into their own individual situations.

Tynjälä and Nikkanen (2009) describe collaborative teaming as networking, in which organisational learning takes place. It is described as the *"exchange of knowledge which takes place mutually but not necessarily symmetrically"* and can be either cooperative or competitive (Tynjälä & Nikkanen, 2009, p. 119). As the Cultural historical activity theory illustrates, learning in this way is shared by the group as a whole, rather than on an individual basis. In addition, Hunt, et. al. (2004) believes that by sharing expertise and perspectives, the collaborative team is able to obtain a 'holistic view' of children.

Tynjälä and Nikkanen (2009) believe the innovation that takes place in a cooperative working partnership represents a 'dialogical relationship' based on the concept of ZPD. With each new idea, a foundation is laid with new ideas being further developed into contexts that are workable within the playroom. Whilst formal knowledge through education is important, Tynjälä & Nikkanen (2009) point out, that 'informal knowledge' the knowledge of individuals not considered as experts plays as significant role in this innovative process. Here the fundamental belief is that " *by interacting with other people one can achieve more than by working alone"* (Tynjälä and Nikkanen, 2009, p. 120).

In addition, Blandford (2000 cited in Burgess and Shelton Mayes, 2007, p. 390) echoes Rogoff's (2003) notion of guided participation, believing kindergartens that become learning communities *"consist of individuals who have opportunities for learning alongside the work tasks they perform, thus helping to bridge theory and practice…"* for both Pedagogues, Supports and Assistants.

2.4.3 Challenges to collaboration in the playroom

Research into the collaborative relationship between the Support and other staff members has reported a number of challenges that range from overlapping of roles, confusion over responsibilities and duties, few opportunities for professional development, lack of adequate supervision and subsequent emotional pitfalls (Dettmer, Thurston, Knackendoffel & Dyck, 2009; Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Giangreco 2001, 2010, 2011; Hunt, et. al. 2004; Lieber, et. al., 1997; Ratcliff, et. al., 2011).

In research conducted by Lieber, et. al. (1997) it was found that the roles and responsibilities of Supports were often in question and overlapping with that of other staff members. Also discovered by many other researchers, was the unstated nature of the roles and responsibilities of Supports which were often open to interpretation (Bourke, 2009; Chopra, et. al., 2004; Giangreco, et. al., 2001, 2010; Howard & Ford, 2007; Ratcliff, et. al., 2011). It was discovered that many Supports were undertaking tasks that they were inadequately qualified to carry out or where being used as an 'admission ticket' for the child with special needs' entry into regular classrooms (Rutherford, 2011). Rutherford (2011) reported that Supports were often regarded as the 'solution to inclusion'.

In many cases, it was discovered that Supports received little to no financial compensation for the extra duties and responsibilities undertaken (Giangreco, et. al. 2001; Bourke, 2009; Howard & Ford, 2007). Research indicated that Supports in those situations expressed feelings of being undervalued and being taken advantage of. When Supports are unable to share in the educational goals, program implementation or service delivery for children with special needs, collaboration is hindered to the extent that Supports maybe unable or even unwilling to take part in the process (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Hunt, et. al., 2004; Sandberg & Ottoson, 2010). Bourke (2009, p. 820) describes this as 'poverty of position', in which Supports are *"seldom identified as major stakeholders"* in the decision making process, but are judged about the "knowledge/skills they need to be 'refitted' for inclusive education", once again highlighting the presence of social hierarchy (Bach, et. al., 2006; Burgess & Shelton Mayes, 2007; Mehan, 1993).

Another point raised by Giangreco (2010, 2011) was the lack of supervision and support afforded to Supports by Teachers or Pedagogues. Giangreco (2010) found many Supports worked on their own in isolation from the professional without direction and often without instruction. Supports in these situations are often required to improvise work practices and strategies by drawing upon previous knowledge or experience (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009). Research conducted by Egilson & Traustadottir (2009, p. 27) discovered in many cases *"teachers revealed that often the responsibilities of the [Support] had not been explicitly considered, laid out or discussed"*.

An additional barrier towards collaborative practices is the amount time allocated to planning. Sandberg and Ottoson (2010) reported that limited time for structural organisation, meetings, staff rostering etc., made it difficult for team members to work together cohesively, leading

once again to the need for Supports to 'figure things out' for themselves (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Giangreco, 2010).

2.5 Competency in the playroom

2.5.1 The Knowledge, Skills and Attitude Model

The knowledge, skills and attitude model of learning is based upon Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains which provides a metacognitive framework for scaffolding individual's thinking, skill development and learning (Athanassiou, Mc Nett & Harvey, 2003; Granello, 2000).

The cognitive domain is concerned with the development of intellectual skills. It involves the 'metacognitive processes' an individual undergoes and how that knowledge is applied to their particular situation (Granello, 2000). Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) describe this as cognitive competency. This domain is divided into six main hierarchical levels. Starting from the simplest form to requiring the most complex form of cognitive abilities, these include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Granello, 2000). Described as 'mastery based' or 'competency learning' it forms the basis of many educational models (Athanassiou, et. al., 2003).

Adding to the cognitive domain is the psychomotor domain in which functional competency is achieved (Delamare Le Deist and Winterton, 2005). Within this domain, skill development focuses on functional, psychomotor and applied skills. This domain covers seven main categories, perception, set or readiness to act, guided responses, mechanisms such as learned responses, complex overt responses of how efficient one is at performing complex movement, adapting one's skills and creating new movement patterns through origination (http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html).

The last part of this model is the affective domain. This domain involves the individual's attitudes and their emotional response to a situation. It can be divided into five categories ranging from the simplest form of behaviour to the more complex behaviour These include, receiving phenomena with an awareness and attentiveness to others, responding to phenomena by reacting and responding, valuing through internalization, organisation through

prioritisation and planning and internalising values by adjusting behaviour to suit the situation (http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/bloom.html).

2.5.2 Facilitating work competencies in the playroom

Work competency in the playroom can be facilitated in any number of ways. In the spirit of meaningful collaboration, the operational perspective of the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes model can offer a workable framework for kindergarten playrooms (Westera, 2001). For this to occur, the playroom must employ goal orientated leadership coupled with a positive work ethic that supports team members. This form of mediated activity promotes skill development, self-concept, self-regulatory behaviours, and self-awareness over one's own motivations, attitudes and values. By gaining a better understanding of oneself, team members obtain a greater awareness and appreciation of the contribution other individuals can offer.

Joint participation, shared philosophy, shared ownership of the child, effective communication, flexible roles and administrative support structures have all been noted as facilitating the collaborative process and building competencies (Burgess & Shelton Mayes, 2007; Dettmer, et. al., 2009; Hunt, et. al. 2004, Højholt, 2011; Lieber, et. al., 1997; Ratcliff, et.al., 2011).

Joint participation through meetings in particular was documented to have a profound impact upon collaboration within the playroom (Gallagher, Malone & Ladner, 2009; Giangreco, et. al. 2001; Hunt, et. al. 2004; Lieber, et. al., 1997; Travers, 2006). Regular meetings were found to provide a platform, for which team members could take part in discussions, share and develop new ideas and in particular demanded accountability (Hunt, et. al., 2004; Sandberg & Ottoson, 2010).

Hunt, et. al. (2004, p. 135) believes accountability requires individual team members to acknowledge ownership in goal development and setting whilst *"helping them to consistently implement the plans of support"*. Collaboration within meetings also views members as contributing peers regardless of job status or educational qualifications. Equally important is the need for staff to claim 'ownership' of the child with special needs (Lieber, et. al., 1997). When all staff members are invested in the development of the child, it not only aids the inclusive process, but automatically creates a bond and a shared responsibility amongst staff. The child with special needs is not the 'delegated' responsibility of the Support, but part of

the community of children that attend the kindergarten playroom. All staff and not only the Support are encouraged to become 'connectors' with families and peers of the children, especially of the children with special needs (Chopra, et. al., 2004; Hughes & Valle- Riestra, 2008; Mansaray, 2006). Open lines of communication between the kindergarten and the home assist in the inclusive process and indicate a sense of 'ownership' and joint responsibility for the child.

Collaboration between staff members is also needed, if children with special needs are to be provided with opportunities within the playroom. In doing so, playrooms practice inclusion by moving away from exclusionary practices such as removing a child for instruction or behaviour management etc. (Hunt, et. al. 2004; Højholt, 2011; Rainforth & York- Barr, 1997). Educational goals and strategies that are set in the playroom benefit not only the child with special needs but the remaining children, staff and the playroom as a whole.

It is considered important to provide in-house training to enhance skill development and work based learning creating competent workers for the benefit of individual and the organisation. Their research indicate that organisations require

> *" work communities seek to be innovative, encourage knowledge-sharing, aim at an open and equal communication climate and provide forums for discussion and the exchange of ideas… [with] strong visionary leadership and a special project organisation seemed also necessary conditions for disseminating and establishing new practices across the network"* (Tynjälä & Nikkanen, 2009, p. 133).

In addition, Burgess and Shelton Mayes (2007) propose training and professional development, as well as providing a [kindergarten] ethos and culture that values individual contribution and collaboration as important. Schools that embraced these measures were found to have strong working relationships between their staff and staff that felt valued (Gallagher, et. al., 2009; Grooms, 2006 cited in Ratcliff, et. al., 2011). Ratcliff, et. al. (2011) believes providing opportunities for professional growth and development results in good working practices by staff members. Through recognising the strengths, talents and skills of each individual employee, self- efficacy is promoted (Bandura (1977 cited in Shyman 2010). High levels of self-efficacy translate to a greater professionalism and commitment to not only the child with special needs but to the whole playroom (Bembenutty, 2006, cited in Shyman, 2010). Hughes & Valle- Riestra (2008, p. 172) suggest kindergartens could *"establish peer-*

support networks for their [Supports], providing clear written job descriptions, offer monetary and non-monetary signs of respect and appreciation and informally monitor their progress on the job" in an effort to address conflict and alleviate workplace stress.

Lastly, administrative support enables playroom staffs to envision and achieve goal targets, assists in allocating time and resources, listens to the concerns and values the contribution and commitment each team member offers to playroom (Lieber, et. al., 2002). As with individual team members, administrative accountability is equally important. Egilson & Traustadottir (2009, p. 34) state, *"the education system needs to make provisions for collaborative skill development for [Supports] …to strengthen structures, to support staff, coordinate efforts and fight inconsistencies…"*.

3 Methodology

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding into the perception Pedagogue Supports have of their role in the playroom and how this relates to collaborative working practices with their immediate work colleagues. This chapter will outline and describe the methods used to collect data and how participants were chosen to take part in the research.

3.1 Research design and strategy

This study uses a qualitative approach, an approach that focuses on exploring and understanding an individual's perception of their own reality (Creswell, 2009; 2013). From this information patterns emerge and meanings may be interpreted (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007; Maxwell, 2013). Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe this as discovering a person's experiences rather than testing for them. According to Creswell (2009), it is holistic in nature and conducted in the natural setting of the participants in keeping with the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is interpretative by nature and as such a phenomenological strategy of inquiry was used. Phenomenological research is characterised by an emic perspective, in how the individuals experience and describe the phenomena. The research will also employ the use of hermeneutic interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) in analysing the data with reference to the theories and relevant literature presented in Chapter 2.

3.1.1 Qualitative Interview

As individual perceptions were being explored, the use of qualitative interview seemed the most appropriate way to glean information from the participants. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), there are a number of advantages to using qualitative interview, those being, the ability to obtain rich and detailed data from the perspectives of the participants; the provision of flexibility in the questioning; the usefulness in asking sensitive questions if the interviewer is skilled in asking probing questions; the provision of accessibility to vulnerable groups of people, e.g. children; and the ability of the researcher in controlling how the data is produced and generated.

Qualitative research interviews as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Rubin and Rubin (1995), relies on the relay of information through interviews that resemble everyday conversations, but use a specific technique of questioning. This form of questioning is semi-structured and is one of the most common forms of interview type in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It allows interviewees the opportunity to discuss their experiences through open ended questions, without straying too far into territory that is not pertinent to the research. This line of questioning whilst not as relaxed as an everyday conversation, is not as rigid as a questionnaire. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 6) believe, *"the flow and choice of topics [within the interview] changes to match what the individual interviewee knows and feels"*, while the researcher guides the discussion by asking specific questions. According to Braun and Clarke (2013) this type interview demands flexibility from the researcher, to allow the questions to ebb and flow with the interviewee. In this way, information that is not anticipated by researcher may be given by the participant. Questions, whilst seeking the same information, may be phrased differently and in a different order to the different interviewees. Kinsey (1948) cited in Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 134) affirms this believing *that "the same question means different things to people. In order to have questions mean the same thing to different people, they must be modified to fit the vocabulary, the educational background and the comprehension of each subject"*.

This was particularly important for this study, as the perspectives offered by the participants reflected their different positions within the playroom of Support, Supervisor and Assistant. With that position, the level of formal education and knowledge differed and the number of years of experience working with children and working with children with special needs differed. Modifying questions to suit the understanding of the participants was necessary and further illustrated an attempt to develop a rapport between myself as the researcher and the participant.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) liken the interviewees, or in this case the participants as 'actors' talking out and describing their experiences. Therefore the role of the interviewer is to encourage interviewees to describe their experiences in greater depth and to encourage them to reflect upon those experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). *"The quality of the data produced in a qualitative interview depends on the quality of the interviewer's skills and subject matter knowledge"* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.82). As an inexperienced interviewer, it was important to develop a rapport with the participants and in turn by admitting that inexperience

it ensured their understanding and made the situation seem less ‘nerve-wracking’ for both researcher and participant. This assisted in questioning and the freer flow of information from the participant.

Qualitative research interviews are also based upon the interviewer being descriptive, focused, positive and above all sensitive to the information they hear. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), reflectivity and sensitivity play a prominent role in the interview process. The way in which the interviewer interprets the information presented impacts upon the understanding of what is being said and how the researcher internally responds to the information on an unconscious level. Throughout the interviews, the interviewer becomes part of the research process and needs to be further aware of the impact they place on that process and on the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013; King & Horrocks, 2010). As the researcher, it was constantly kept in mind the perceptions that the participants may have of me conducting the interview. It was therefore important to the research process to be open and honest with the participants about the intentions of the research, the background of myself as the researcher and to instil a sense of trust and openness with the intent that it would be reciprocated.

Some limitations of qualitative interview described by Braun and Clarke (2013) include the amount of time to construct, conduct and transcribe the interviews for the researcher. For the participant, these types of interviews may be time consuming, not ensure total anonymity, have less control over the data that is produced and may not be ideal in discussing sensitive information (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In order to address these limitations, participants were informed about the expected duration of the interview and further contact was requested if more information was required at a late stage; the interviews took place at a different site but on location of their work place, and participants were made aware that they had a right to view the information collected and view the finished research at a later date.

3.2 Sampling

In order to find the appropriate participants, purposeful sampling was used. According to Gall, et al. (2007), this type of sampling provides rich information, and an in-depth insight into particular individuals.

Six participants were selected, from two different kindergartens, with three participants from each kindergarten. First and foremost it was important that a Support be chosen as a participant, and as I was exploring their perceptions of themselves in their working role, it was also of importance that the perceptions of those that work with them on a daily basis were also represented, hence the Supervisor and the Assistant. Creswell (2013, p 157) describes this type of sampling as 'maximum variation sampling'. The participants that were chosen had differing job positions but they experienced the phenomena simultaneously, allowing the increased *"likelihood that the findings [would] reflect differences or different perspectives"*.

Secondly, the use of two participants with the same employment status was used to counteract any issues that may have arisen due to the lack of experience of me as an interviewer or researcher bias. As this type of research is interpretative, it was important that I was aware that the style of interviewing with one participant could differ from another and equally their own responses could be influenced by their bias towards me as the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

The only criteria set forth in terms of selecting the participants were that the Support, the Supervisor and the Assistant had to have worked together in the same playroom at the same time. This was to ensure that the way each participant reviewed the role of the Support and the collaborative working process was a shared and connected experience. Rubin and Rubin (1995, p. 66) attest that *"when people in the arena have different perspectives, the interviewees should represent the range of points of view"*. Education and working experience at this point were factors that were not deemed to be part of the sampling criteria.

In addition, in order to counteract any bias, protect anonymity and to create a richer and thicker description of the phenomenon, the two kindergartens that were chosen were in differing municipalities and separated geographically on two different islands.

3.2.1 Gaining access to participants

In order to gain access to the participants, a precise protocol was followed. Permission was sought from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services and their equivalent Faroese counterpart, Dátueftirlit. Once approval for the research was granted, each kindergarten was approached with a written letter describing the purpose of the study. The letter described the

requirements for the participants, sought informed consent, ensured data protection and confidentiality.

I chose to approach each kindergarten with letter in hand for a number of reasons. Those being, to address Kindergarten Directors personally, answering any questions and queries immediately; to dispel any reluctance to take part in the research by speaking the native language, as the information letter was written in English; and to save time in the process of finding suitable participants. Professional etiquette requires following a chain of authority, it was therefore important to approach the Kindergarten Directors first as my initial contacts to finding potential participants (Gall, et.al., 2007). People in these positions who can assist in granting you access to potential participants, documentation, or anything pertinent to your research, are commonly referred to people as 'gatekeepers' (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

Whilst every kindergarten in the Faroe Islands employs both Supervisors and Assistants, the presence of Supports is often kept confidential. This is to safeguard both the child and their family from negative attention and to assist in the inclusive process. Knowledge of the presence of a Support is often on a 'needs to know basis '. Therefore using the Kindergarten Directors as gatekeepers was especially important in gaining access to these Supports. Ultimately, it was the Kindergarten Directors who initiated contact with all the potential participants and sought their consent in taking part in the research.

3.2.2 Participants

Supports

Two Supports were used for this study. Of these individuals, one was an educated Pedagogue having a number of years working experience. The other Support had been previously employed as a Assistant and had held the position of Support for a period of time. Both individuals had held their most recent position as a Support for one year. This was due in part to the short term contract that may begin at any time throughout the year but ends when the kindergarten closes for the summer industry holiday. The contract for this support may be renewed on a needs basis; however this was not the case for the two Supports in question. One Support had previous experience supporting a child with special needs the other did not.

Assistants

Both Assistants interviewed had numerous years' experience working with children. Neither had experience working with a child with special needs or had held the position of Support during their working lifetimes. One Assistant had previous experience working together with a Support, whilst the other did not.

Supervisors

The Supervisors interviewed in the study were both recent Pedagogue graduates, with no previous experience holding this position. One Pedagogue before taking her tertiary qualifications had worked as a Support, whilst the other Pedagogue was inexperienced in working with children with special needs. Apart from the experience of one Supervisor as a Support, neither had experience working with a Support within a playroom situation.

3.3 Data Collecting Procedures

In keeping with qualitative tradition, as the researcher I was the main instrument in the data collection process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each interview being recorded digitally on an audio recorder. Hand written interview notes whilst not taken during the interview process, were recorded after the interview had taken place.

Although many researchers advise note taking during the interview (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012; Gall, et.al., 2007), notes were recorded after the interview. This was due in part to the fact that the interviews were conducted in a language that was not my mother tongue; therefore it was felt that valuable attention to details would be lost when writing down details in a language that was different to that being spoken. Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, p 179) support this action suggesting that note taking during an interview can often serve to distract both the interviewer and interviewee by *"interrupting the free flow of conversation"*, as would have been the case in this instance.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim. Although a time consuming process, due to inexperience in interviewing and transcribing, it was the chosen method for transcription.

3.3.1 Interview Guide

Three individual interview guides were constructed and used to gather information from the participants. Questions were formulated and designed around the initial research questions posed in the research proposal and subsequently revised after a pilot interview was conducted. The questions themselves were based upon professional background, knowledge, experience and opinions (Fraenkel, et.al., 2012). Main questions were posed to each participant and follow up questions were asked based upon the answers received. In addition, the three interview guides that were constructed were designed specifically for the couplings of job position, i.e., a guide specifically for the Supports, Assistants, and the Supervisors.

An advantage of using a guide is that the researcher is able to ask both clarifying and probing questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel, et.al., 2012). This assists the researcher in gaining a clearer understanding of the participant's answers and enables the researcher to question further based upon those answers.

One of the negative issues relating to an interview guide approach is that not all questions are scripted, meaning as the guide questions are asked, questions relating to the information given by participants can arise and be explored. Questions phrased and sequenced differently to the different interviewees may seek the same information, but risk being answered quite differently by the interviewee, leading to irrelevant information and ultimately becoming more time consuming (Fraenkel, et.al.,2012).

3.3.2 Pilot interview

Three pilot interviews were conducted before the formal interviews took place in either kindergarten. A pilot study is in effect a mock trialing of interviewing, observational, and documenting skills that you intend to use during the data collection process. It highlights any problem areas before the study and allows the researcher to modify those elements (Fraenkel, et.al, 2012; Gall, et.al., 2007). As perceptions were being explored, carrying out a pilot observation was not necessary. Additionally as an inexperienced and novice interviewer a pilot interview was seen as an important and necessary part of the research process.

In order to conduct a pilot study, Creswell (2013) suggests that it is possible to *"[select cases] on the basis of convenience, access and geographic proximity"*. It was chosen to conduct an initial pilot interview with an Assistant who had been employed as a Support for one year.

This decision was one based upon convenience, accessibility and close geographic proximity. The contract period for the support had expired just months before the pilot interview took place. The interview took place in her house, which seemed at the time more appropriate than her workplace. In hindsight, this proved to be a distraction as her family was present at the time, but in testing the interview questions, the recording equipment and my skills as an interviewer, it was invaluable. It was particularly helpful to obtain her insight into the questions and the line of questioning that was explored during the interview.

In addition, two pilot interviews were conducted with two different Kindergarten Directors. Generally several pilot interviews are not necessary, however as I was interviewing different groups of people, I chose to conduct the further two interviews in order to create a balanced background view into the way in which Kindergarten playrooms function.

As a result, the interview guide was aptly amended. Pilot testing was not undertaken for the remaining interview guides, for those intended for the Assistants or the Supervisors. However, they were read and evaluated by student peers and adjustments were made to the wording accordingly.

3.3.3 Conducting interviews

After the initial meeting with the Kindergarten Directors to seek their involvement in the research, I met informally with several, at that time potential participants. In both kindergartens, I was given a tour of the playrooms in which they worked and was introduced to several other staff members working at that time from other playrooms.

Once both verbal and written consent was obtained from each participant and the kindergarten, a date was set for each initial interview via telephone. At this stage, I chose to set only one confirmed date. It was my intention to set subsequent interview dates in conjunction with each playroom and follow a schedule that was appropriate and least disruptive for them.

I intended that each interview would take place during the working day and preferably in the morning. From personal experience working in a kindergarten, I knew that each playroom was more likely to be better staffed in the morning due to the rotating shift hours that many kindergarten workers work. It was not my intention to create a vacuum in staffing if one

participant left to take part in the interview, therefore times and dates reflected the playroom's staffing schedule, rather than my personal schedule.

Interviews were conducted in as naturalistic setting as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This was to ensure that participants felt comfortable and at ease in surroundings that were familiar. Each interview took place in the workplace of the participant, but away from the playroom in which they worked. This was to ensure privacy and minimal distractions for the interview. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to an hour, depending upon the responses of each participant. And as mentioned previously, was recorded digitally on an audio recorder.

When conducting the interviews, I was aware that my demeanour as an Interviewer and as a non-native speaker would impact upon the interview. Following Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) interviewing strategy I attempted to set the stage for the interview. I 'briefed' each participant before the formal questioning began. This included once again introducing the topic of the research, my credentials as a student researcher, how the information would be used and the expected completion date, reassurances of confidentiality, informed consent and the ability to withdraw from the research. In addition, to ease the situation for each participant, I enquired as to what language was preferable for them for the conduction of the interview. As the Interviewer, my first language was most preferable to me, but in order to gain as thick and as rich description of information as possible, I had to allow the participants to speak in a language that was more comfortable for them.

After each interview, I 'debriefed' each individual (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This required thanking each personally for taking part in the research, an informal chat about the interview process and the request for additional information if required. As a gesture of goodwill, a small token of appreciation was given to each kindergarten after all interviews had taken place to show gratitude for their willing participation and enthusiasm.

Once interviews were conducted, each interview was personally transcribed verbatim without the use of transcribing programs or translators. Transcription was both in Faroese and English. Further interviews were not conducted with any of the participants due to the time constraints of the research project; however contact was made with some participants to clarify information that was given during the interviews.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the interpretative process of breaking down data. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 190) believe it is an on-going process that is initiated before the interviews are conducted, with the *"theoretical conceptions of what is investigated [providing] the basis for making decisions [about the method] …"*According to Huberman and Miles (2002, p. 309) qualitative data analysis is concerned with "*detection and the tasks of defining, categorizing, theorizing, explaining, exploring and mapping".*

Throughout this study a hermeneutic approach was utilised in interpreting and analysing the data. By employing hermeneutics, interpretation occurred through interpreting the meaning of what was being said by the participants, and relating it to the entire context of interview (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; King & Horrocks, 2010; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This process of understanding is known as a hermeneutic circle, in which the process of analyses moves back and forth with finding meaning in parts of what is being communicated by the participant to the entire context (Cohen, et. al. 2007). Each stage of the process creates a newer understanding and interpretation of the context.

In order to break down the data, constructs or categories needed to be discovered in the data, *these "refer to a certain type of phenomenon mentioned in the database"* (Gall, et. al., 2007, p. 467). Once categories had been established, coding was undertaken. Coding is essentially, *"reducing the data into meaningful segments and assigning names for the segments"* (Creswell, 2013, p. 180).

Using elements of a process of 'phenomenological reflection' as described by van Manen (1990 cited in Creswell, 2013) general understanding was initially sought from the transcribed data. Themes relating to the posed research questions were established before rereading the transcripts. Key words and statements were highlighted as part of coding with the addition of handwritten notes in the margins and text.

The transcription process itself involved transferring the recorded material into written text, by full transcription (King & Horrocks, 2010). Although described as time consuming (King & Horrocks, 2010), the text was quoted verbatim due to the lack of experience in transcribing interviews. In order to overcome such inexperience, King and Horrocks (2010) believe it is

critical that the style of transcription remain consistent throughout the interviews in order not to compromise the analysis.

A basic three stage system for thematic analysis (King and Horrocks, 2010) was applied to the data collected from the participants. Stage one focused on descriptive coding (ibid.). This involved rereading the transcribed material in order to capture the relevant comments and statements made by the participants. Each statement was highlighted and a descriptive code was attached. Stage two involved using interpretive coding (ibid.). This searched for the relevant meaning with descriptive codes being grouped together in order to relate them to the greater context of the research. Stage three required constructing central themes that related directly to the theory and literature described in Chapter 2. Throughout each stage of the process, codes and themes were checked to ensure the interpretations remained true to the research questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

3.5 Ensuring Quality and Rigor

Any research regardless of the method chosen needs the assurance that the necessary measures have been undertaken to ensure the quality of the data collected is truthful and collected in a manner that is reliable (Dey, 1993). Whilst debate exists as to the terminology used to check the standards of the data and data collection or even to the concepts themselves, the researcher is still required to prove the authenticity of the methods and the materials utilised (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

3.5.1 Validity

According to Yin (2011, p. 78) *"a valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world…that was studied"*. It is concerned with the process undertaken by the researcher and the influences posed on the researcher by outside forces such as past experiences or previous knowledge of the phenomena, educational background and even cultural background. To ensure validity and counteract bias of any kind, researchers need to employ trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility and objectivity throughout the research process (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Equally important to the research process is researcher awareness to the issues that may threaten validity (Maxwell, 2013). Yin (2011) describes these threats as 'rival explanations'. They are alternative explanations for the original interpretations made by the researcher. Maxwell (2013) believes that in qualitative research, 'researcher bias' and 'reactivity' need to be addressed by each researcher.

Researcher bias is the *"researcher's existing theory, goals or preconceptions"* (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). Past experiences, previous education, morals, values and upbringing all impact upon the way in which we both physically and psychologically interact and conduct the research. Reactivity involves the understanding of how we as researchers impact upon the participants and the research process. Maxwell (2013, p. 125) believes, whilst it is impossible not to influence any aspect of the research process, the goal is *"to understand it and use it productively*". Therefore as a researcher, *"validity in qualitative researcher is not the result of indifference, but of integrity"* (Hess cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 124).

In order to ensure validity throughout the research process and as mentioned previously, a hermeneutic approach was used. Using methods of triangulation in which, rich and thick data was collected, information was checked and clarified by the participants, researcher bias was clarified, and peer debriefing was utilised (Creswell, 2009; 2013; Fraenkel, et. al., 2012; Gall, et. al., 2007; King & Horrocks, 2010; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Maxwell, 2013, Yin, 2011). Triangulation using different sources of data was used. Themes based upon the participant's perspective were founded using theoretical explanations and previous research was reviewed to link any common findings.

Participant responses were verbally paraphrased and the meanings were queried and checked constantly throughout the interview to eliminate any misunderstanding. If an answer was not clear, questions were asked for greater clarification. This was particularly important as the interviews were conducted in a language that was not my first language.

3.5.2 Threats to Validity

Several limitations were identified that could affect the research and a number of solutions proposed. Language could have been an issue throughout the research project. As a non-native Faroese speaker, written correspondence between me and the kindergartens was in

English. However interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the interviewee, either English or Faroese.

In order to maintain the quality of information and eliminate misunderstanding, the audio taped recordings of interviews Faroese were translated. In order to avoid linguistic misunderstandings, a native Faroese individual and dictionaries were consulted.

In addition, being a non-Faroese individual may have provided a limitation in the understanding or describing of culturally influenced practices.

Being a student and having a pedagogical background may have also limited the amount of information revealed by the participants. Kindergarten staff may have been guarded in their responses, if they believed they are being professionally judged on the information they provided. The introductory meeting before official interviews took place could possibly have assisted in dispelling any feelings of discomfort felt by the participants.

To obtain balanced information, the study was limited to two kindergartens, both regionally and geographically apart. This was to ensure that there was no bias that may have been present if only one kindergarten was the focus.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 1, my previous experience and education played a significant role in choosing this avenue for research. In order to remain objective, it was necessary to approach each interview with no bias or expectations as to the responses of each individual participant. The intention was to present an honest, inquiring and non-judgemental position in order for participants to freely convey their thoughts and opinions. However I was keenly aware throughout the interview process, how my position as a researcher might influence the participants and their responses.

As the interviews progressed, rival explanations were confronted. Initially, the focus of the research rested on the Support. As intended in the research proposal, the Support was central to the research, with opinions of their co-workers taken into consideration. However as the interviews were conducted it became clearer that the role of the Support whilst being the focus of the study was not central in the working dynamics of the playroom. What was becoming clearer was the role they played working within a team. My view as the researcher was too ‘blinkered’ and needed to be widen to place a greater emphasis on their co-workers.

Validation was further ensured once transcription of the interviews took place. In order to guarantee the true authenticity of particular words or phrases, a Faroese-English dictionary and informed peers were consulted. This was done in a way which did not compromise the confidentiality of the participants.

One procedure used by researchers to validate research that was not employed, was the use of prolonged time in the field. Rather than interview participants several times, over a longer period of time, any queries about specific information or questions were directed to the particular participant. This was due mostly to time constraints, as interviewing took place during working hours. It was felt unreasonable to disrupt the working schedule of a whole playroom for the sake of a few questions, but easier to contact individual participants via telephone taking less of their time.

3.5.2 Generalisability

Addressing generalisability in qualitative studies allows for the reader to apply research to either their own research, drawing parallels in the findings (Maxwell, 2013). It relates to *"whether the knowledge in a specific situation may be transferred to other relevant situations"* (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 262) further add, that by generalising, one can analyse the *"differences and similarities of the two situations"*. Yin (2011, p. 100) suggests that by making analytical generalisations in qualitative research, one does not focus on 'numerical estimates', but seeks to *"develop and then discuss how its findings might have implications for an improved understanding of particular concepts"*.

In order to allow generalisation, the researcher needs to provide thick descriptions, an accurate account of the methodological process and justification for the research, so that others may see the value and importance of such research (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Generalisation is particularly useful if further investigation into the phenomenon is to take place by other researchers.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In order to make this a sound and ethical research study, a number of ethical considerations were been taken into account. These included securing permission, voluntary participation,

informed consent and confidentiality, ensuring participant welfare, and maintaining research integrity (Gall, et. al., 2007).

Once the research proposal was accepted by the University of Oslo research board, an application was made to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (see Appendix 1.). This application detailed aspects of the study pertaining to the purpose, goals, target participants, ethical procedures, measures for protecting confidentiality within the study as well as copies of introduction letters to potential participants . After the application was approved, permission was sought from the Faroese equivalent of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services, Dátueftirlit. The application required the same details as previously mentioned (see Appendix 2.).

In seeking permission to undertake the study, an introductory letter describing the proposed research was given to each kindergarten. Once permission for the research to proceed was granted via the Kindergarten Directors, potential participants were found. Each potential participant received the letter describing the purpose, methods, procedures, and their expected level of involvement within the study. This letter included reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality of all information collected. Accompanying this letter was a consent form detailing the voluntary nature of the study and the ability to withdraw at any time (see Appendix 3).

Confidentiality is the major ethical consideration in this research project. In order to maintain confidentiality, the names, job position, and the location of each kindergarten was coded using a code known only to the researcher. Information that was stored on a private PC was password protected. In a small society such as the Faroe Islands, participants needed to be assured of the confidential nature of their participation and their anonymity when providing information. By doing so, it furthered reassured and ensured their willingness to partake in the study.

Once the research is complete, a copy of the completed thesis will be sent to each kindergarten that has taken part, rather than to individual participants. All information and raw data collected throughout the research will be destroyed as stated in both applications to the Norwegian and Faroese data services and in keeping with the assurances given to the participants. Throughout the study, participant welfare was paramount, and a professional and ethical relationship maintained throughout the course of the research.

4 Presentation of Data

This chapter will present the findings as relayed by the Supports and their co- workers, the Assistants, and Supervisors. Through the themes of role expectations, responsibilities, knowledge and education, inclusive processes and co-operative working practices, the emic perspective of the participants will be explored.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two kindergartens from two differing council areas were chosen for the research. In each kindergarten, a participant was chosen from the three job roles that are represented in a typical kindergarten playroom.

4.1 Role Expectations

Participants were asked questions relating to their perception into the role of the Support within the playroom. Supervisors and Assistants were asked to define that role and comment upon how that role differed from their own. They were also asked to outline any expectations as to the role of Supports, if they had any. Supports were also asked to define their role as a Pedagogue Support and what to their understanding of that role (see Appendix 1).

4.1.1 Education as a defining point

The way in which each Pedagogue Support defined their role in the playroom related to their understanding of their job title, which in turn was related to their understanding of the assumed responsibilities the position demanded.

The educational level of the Pedagogue Support determined the expectations placed upon them by their Supervisors. Supports that were qualified Pedagogues were expected to take an active and similar role to that of any other Pedagogue working in the playroom. This included meeting with auxiliary services, creating structured individual programs for the child/ren, meeting parents as that child's central contact person and providing valuable professional interchange between the Pedagogues. One Supervisor stated*, "they have the same role as the Pedagogues [working in the playroom] …the Support Pedagogue that was set in this position told us what we should work with".*

4.1.2 Role as a Facilitator

In addition to this, one Support believed her role was also that of a Facilitator. Her role was to ensure the inclusion of the child within the playroom both physically and emotionally by ensuring that other staff members shared in the responsibility of providing for the child.

Paradoxically, by taking the role of Facilitator, the Support believed she was working towards reducing her role of that as a Pedagogue Support. The Support at one time expressed, *"... I don't want to be called a Pedagogue Support, and the others don't call me a Pedagogue Support. It took a really long time to instil that in the minds of the other staff members"*.

The role of facilitator for the Pedagogue Support was also in the form of a Contact person for the child with assumed special needs. This position was undertaken by one of the Supports. Contact was often initiated by the Support and involved the liaison between the kindergarten, the child's parents and auxiliary services i.e. Sernam. However this was not the case for the other Support Pedagogue.

4.1.3 Role as a team member

Both Supports believed their role included that of a team member, being part of a team of staff, working with all children in the playroom, rather than providing individualised support for one part of a playroom. As one Support expressed eloquently *"I'm not on my own now. I'm part of a classroom and I can talk with the others on issues"*.

The consensus given from the assistants is that the role of the Pedagogue Support is the same as any member of the playroom team. The Support was expected to provide extra support within the playroom, sharing the same duties as other staff members. One assistant stated *"we all had the same role. You couldn't see a difference between us and the Pedagogue Support"*.

However there was an underlying belief by an assistant that the Support Pedagogue was expected to be the 'sole' supporter for the child with special needs, whose role was to be the central point of contact for the child with special needs. The Support was looked upon as the main 'contact or go to person' in relation to that particular child/ren. One assistant stated that when *"decisions need to be taken, somebody has to have [that] role in the end"*. Despite the general belief that the role of the Support was on par with other staff members, one assistant

admitted *"yes, there is more expectations of her…the duties are divided, however the Support Pedagogue still has the main responsibility"*.

Supplementary role

Both Supports understood their role as a supplement staff member, to provide and increase the number of staffing hours needed in the playroom in order to address the needs of all the children. They were adamant that their role was first and foremost to support the playroom as a whole, rather than support individual children. One Support *mentioned "we don't call it Pedagogue Support anymore… [instead] the classroom is allocated the support hours"*.

Both Supervisors were in agreement that the role of the Support Pedagogue was an integral part of providing additional staffing and additional support for all the children in the playroom, not just the child/ren with special needs.

Pedagogue Supports were allocated several roles in the playroom by themselves and their co-workers. These included team member, facilitator, contact person and additional staff member. These roles were however reported to be dependent upon the level of knowledge, education and skills that the Pedagogue Support possessed.

4.2 Responsibilities

Participants were asked to define their responsibilities with regards to the responsibilities of the Pedagogue Support. They were asked to specify the responsibilities of the Support and if that in any way was the same, overlapped or dissimilar to their own responsibilities. Participants were also specifically asked what level of responsibility they felt towards the child/ren with special needs, parents and auxiliary services (see Appendix 1).

4.2.1 Individual versus shared responsibility

Working for the benefit all the children, not just the children with special needs, was seen as a major responsibility by both Supports. However this differed according to the Support's educational background. For the Support with tertiary qualifications, the level of responsibility rose to attending meetings with parents and auxiliary services, overseeing the transitory phase for the child/ren with special needs entering the playroom, planning and

implementing educational plans and informing staff regularly regarding issues concerning the child/ren.

When asked about her particular responsibilities in the playroom, one Pedagogue Support felt that there was a responsibility not to focus upon the child/ren with special needs too much at the expense of the other children in the playroom. She believed that a heightened level of responsibility felt towards a child with special needs could impact negatively upon the other children in the playroom. She stated *"there is a price and [one needs to ask] at what price should that affect the other children in the classroom who one has responsibility for"*. She emphasised that her sense of responsibility was extended to all of the children, not just one particular child. Whereas, the other Support also felt responsible for all children, however this was coupled with particular concern for the well-being of the child/ren with special needs.

Whilst both Supports believed they had an extended responsibility to all children in the playroom, one Support felt that the level of responsibility placed upon her by other staff members was greater than it should have been. She described it as *" one of the negative aspects, that one [feels the] need to say, 'we are a playroom and I can't do everything' ...we all need to take responsibility. It is something one needs to say often"*.

Both Supervisors were in agreement that the role of the Support Pedagogue was an integral part of providing additional staffing and additional support for all the children in the playroom, not just the child/ren with special needs. It was also their belief that responsibility for the children with special needs and all the children in general was the joint responsibility of all staff members. One Supervisor stated *"everyone has responsibility over the child/ren that need the extra support. We involved everyone in the playroom, so that everyone heard the same message and worked towards the same goals"*.

Assistants differed in their expectations of the Pedagogue Support. One Assistant believed the Support's responsibility for the child/ren with special needs was equal to that of all other staff members working in the playroom, whilst the other stated explicitly that ultimate responsibility lay with the Support. There was an understanding that responsibility for the child/ren in question was to be shared, however it was the Support that needed to oversee the day to day issues that arose. One Assistant stated *"in the end it is the person who is the Support Pedagogue [who is responsible]...I also take responsibility, especially when the Support is not at work, then we need to step forward"*.

The other Assistant whilst aware of the unspoken added responsibility placed on the Support, added,

> *"I think there was more responsibility on the Support than on other [staff members]. It can be positive and negative because in this instance you can hold back and not take responsibility if there is something, even though you are expected to step up".*

Goal setting

Goal setting and educational planning were deemed as responsibilities, particularly when the Support had pedagogical qualifications. One Support acknowledged *"I present and explain to the others the educational plans and goals for that child. I also explain the contribution and standpoint of Sernam [the auxiliary service] with them"*. She adds further, *"I've done my own goal setting…because I have had free rein to do so and to do exactly what needs to be done"*.

Expectations and the level of responsibility for Pedagogue Supports that did not have a pedagogical background differed to for Supports that had a pedagogical education. For Supports with no tertiary education attendance whilst attendance at staff meetings was expected, and opinions, thoughts and suggestions accepted, there was no expectation that they would create individual programs, be the sole contact person or sole support for the child/ren with special needs. *"No there were no particular duties. If she were a Pedagogue Support with a particular child with practical needs…it would have been her that went [and assisted]"*.

4.2.2 Facilitating

Other responsibilities included promoting and facilitating inclusion with one Support stating *"[that is] my end goal, because he will never be like other children, but the point was about having him have an equal place in the classroom".*

Whilst both Assistants worked on the premise that responsibility for the child/ren was shared, meetings with parents and auxiliary services were the responsibility of the Supports and the Supervising Pedagogues. There was an expectation that Supports attend meetings within the playroom and were given the same information and directions as the other staff members.

4.2.3 Conflict resolution

One Support felt issues regarding conflict resolution were also seen as being a function of the Pedagogue Support, with expectations that their presence would either assist with 'extra hands' to dispel the conflict or to 'step in' and resolve the conflict.

Another issue which raised a question of 'who is responsible' was conflict resolution between the child/ren with special needs and others. One Assistant believed that again this was to be shared by all staff members and taken on 'whoever is physically closest to the conflict needs to step in' approach, whilst the other believed it was the role of the Support to 'step in' and deal with the conflict.

4.2.4 Information sharing and receiving

Expectations such as educating themselves about issues regarding the child/ren also arose with one Support saying,*" I need to inform myself about a diagnosis or [gather specific] information".*

Whilst self-informing was an aspect of the Pedagogue Support's responsibilities, so was the ability to inform co-workers, Kindergarten management, auxiliary services and parents about issues that were pertinent to the child/ren … *"I have always informed the Director about everything that is happening, what I am doing and why".* This included regular meetings that included the Support and their Supervisor.

Three main responsibilities were attributed to the Support. These included facilitation through strategizing and planning, conflict resolution and the sharing of information. Generally for all participants it was clear that responsibilities regarding the child/ren with special needs was a joint undertaking for each staff member in the playroom. However, Supports, especially those possessing tertiary qualifications assumed and were expected by their Supervisors to take a greater part of that responsibility.

4.3 Competency in the Playroom

Participants were asked how the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possessed influenced their ability to work in the playroom. Participants were also asked if they possessed any tertiary qualifications relating to early childhood development or special needs education or any related education. All participants were asked if they had any previous work experience working with children with disabilities and in what capacity that occurred (see Appendix 1).

4.3.1 Knowledge

A pedagogical education was seen as necessary by the majority of participants. Both Supports saw the value of employing qualified Pedagogues as Supports, with one Support stating *" …this work craves so much because we are given more and more responsibility and it is good if you have learnt something beforehand"*. This was added with, *"I think that children have the right to have staff [members] that know something about children, and psychological and developmental knowledge about children and play"*. Whilst it may be necessary to employ Assistants rather than Pedagogues as Supports, there was an opinion that as a Pedagogue one has to have *"specialised knowledge"*, training and education that can assist in the inclusive process of children with special needs. One Support questioned *"what can one do [having] no education or experience when working with children with special needs?"*

Both Supervisors believed they were advantaged by the fact they were recent graduates from University. It was thought that this advantage of knowledge and education allowed them to make informed decisions regarding the use of Supports within the playroom. In addition, it was the first time either Supervisor had worked closely with Supports in the playroom.

Although ideal, Supervisors were aware that in some instances unqualified Supports were necessary due to the lack of qualified staff members to take on the role of Support. In this instance, Supervisors identified their need to *"…set structures in place…and take the initiative"*.

Neither Supervisor was aware of any additional training course available for Supports regardless of qualifications, offering further information or education regarding working with children with special needs. Training regarding matters related to special needs education

was either offered by the kindergarten as part of staff development training, which were held twice a year, or as part of the formal Bachelor of Pedagogy offered by the University.

4.3.2 Skills

Much of their knowledge and experience in working with children with special needs had been learnt 'on the job' for both Supports. This learning took the form of learning from others. One Support stated *"[at one time] I worked with two Pedagogues and they supervised me and of course I learnt from them"*, and learning through personal and professional experience. One Support believed this experience was invaluable. She stated, *"…if you have experience then that makes a difference"*.

Coincidentally, one of the Supervisors had previous experience working as a Support before she gained her pedagogical qualifications. As a result, she was aware of some of the issues Supports face whilst working in the playroom. *She stated "as I have had experience behind me, I felt that I knew a few things that needed to be done, because I had studied, I thought it was achievable"*.

4.3.3 Attitudes

Both Supports believed it was also necessary for structures to be in place providing additional information and training to those holding that position. It was suggested by one Support that professional specialised advice and supervision be provided by an advisory team specifically designed for Pedagogue Supports. It was hoped that such a team would prove invaluable by providing information, training or advice especially for Supports that had no formal qualifications. As one Support attested, *"I need a greater understanding in order to understand [a] diagnosis… and [one] should always [their] refresh knowledge".*

Each Supervisor was of the opinion that it was necessary to have qualified Pedagogues working as Supports. By having qualified Supports, issues relating to children with special needs could be discussed and implemented with the knowledge that opinions were being based upon sound philosophical knowledge. It was thought that an open forum for discussion would be much more readily available with qualified Supports. One Supervisor specified *"if you are a Pedagogue Support, then you need to know what you are doing"*. With

qualifications, one Supervisor mentioned, *"…matters were often brainstormed and discussed"*.

Assistants believed that it was necessary and preferable to have qualified Pedagogues working as Supports for children with special needs in the playroom. This opinion stemmed from the belief that their education enabled them to have a better understanding of the issues relating to child development. One Assistant stated *"Pedagogues do a better job at structuring and giving us good advice about things we don't know"*.

Assistants believed that if Supports were not qualified Pedagogues, experience working with children was necessary. The prior knowledge of the playroom situation and the children by one Support was an advantage according to one Assistant… *"We wanted her to be the Support as she already knew the playroom…she knew what she was coming into…the children knew her [and] she worked well with all the staff…"*.

While both Assistants were aware that having an educated Support was a desired requirement by kindergarten management, the opinion was that while education was an important factor it was also not always necessary. One Assistant believed that *"you can also find good Supports that are Pedagogue Assistants"*. However, if training was made available to Assistants in order to gain a level of accreditation in supporting children with special needs, one Assistant mentioned she would be interested.

The general consensus from all the participants was that formal qualifications are necessary especially working with children with special needs. It was also felt by all staff that opportunities to take part in training courses, particularly with regards to special needs education were necessary and should be offered as part of staff development. In the absence of education, prior knowledge regarding the issues relating to children with special needs and support work were greatly valued by all participants.

4.4 Collaborative working practices

Participants were asked to comment about collaborative working practices, if and how they were engineered, and the positive or negative outcomes that were experienced. They were specifically asked if they were involved in both formal and informal meetings with playroom staff members, parents and outside auxiliary services (see Appendix 1).

4.4.1 Obstacles to collaboration

Key obstacles to collaboration in the playroom were identified as staff competency and workplace practices in the playroom. Issues related to attitudes concerning education, knowledge and experience of staff; responsibility; levels of staff support; playroom practices; and conflict and stress.

Lack of formal qualifications

All three groups of participants mentioned education, knowledge and experience as influencing good work practices in the playroom. In order for work practices to reflect sound working principles, a number of participants believed it was important for staff to have obtained qualifications in child pedagogy. One opinion offered, suggested that the difference could be attributed to lack of theoretical understanding into child development resulting in *"seeing things in a different perspective"*. It was also suggested by another participant that having a background in pedagogy allowed for greater discussion regarding day to day issues in the playroom. One participant recalled *"…I needed more opinions and input from another Pedagogue"* when it came to discussing the implementation of different strategies. Whilst she was aware that qualifications did not in itself make for a better Pedagogue, she added *"there are Pedagogue Assistants that have worked for many years and are very good, but there is still a difference"*.

More than one participant suggested that kindergartens should only employ staff that held the relevant qualifications. One participant *declared "I know some staff do not want to admit it and I don't want to disparage Assistants, but I haven't studied for sheer pleasure. I hope I am a better Pedagogue because I have studied 3 and half years"*.

Predictably, it was felt by some participants that with having an education, it was an expectation that one would shoulder a greater burden of the responsibility. As one participant pointed out, "yes there are more expectations of her. The duties are divided between the staff; however [she] still has the main responsibility… somebody needs to shoulder that".

Staff inexperience

In addition to education, lack of appropriate working experience in working with children with special needs was also seen as a hindrance in the playroom. One participant revealed that

she had personal experience with children with special needs but felt that this did not qualify her to work directly with children with special needs in the playroom. It was her understanding that lack of formal education precluded her from working as a Support by kindergarten management. Another participant concurred, saying *"…for someone like me, personal experience is not enough"*.

In the instance that educational background was not applicable, all participants were unanimous in saying that experience working with children with special needs was what led them to the position and viewpoints that they held today. As one participant put it *"I often think about if I worked [the way I do now] coming directly from University and not having any experience, it would have been terrible for me"*. Similarly another participant points out *"I can't separate [experience and education] anymore, I know what I know because I have studied and I know 100 % because of the experience I had [some years ago]"*.

Lack of training opportunities

Regardless of what job position was held, all participants believed that there were little to no opportunities to gain further skills or qualifications apart from the twice yearly staff training days. All participants mentioned their interest in obtain further training in relation to working with children with special needs.

Responsibility overload

Many of the participants experienced a certain amount of stress during the period of time that the Support Pedagogues were employed in the playroom. Whilst the stress did not appear to be the result of their presence, the situation created by having a child/ren with special needs was seen as a contributing factor by the participants. This related to concerns regarding responsibility. Questions were raised regarding the level of responsibility attributed or assumed by members of staff.

As mentioned previously (see chapter 4.3) the general consensus within the playroom was that responsibility of the child/ren with special needs was a shared task. However, it was often felt at times by several participants that responsibility lay with the Supports, regardless of those concerted efforts. This was mentioned as contributing to the level of stress and anxiety felt by a few of the participants. One participant explained *"...this work craves so much from*

us because we are given more and more responsibility". Another added *" [we] are allocated a set number of hours to fix everything that goes on here, and that is too big a responsibility for few people"*.

Contributing to the elevated stress levels, was the feeling by many participants that support hours allocated to the playroom did not reflect the amount of time and effort needed to ensure the smooth progression and inclusion of the child/ren with special needs into the playroom. As one participant offered, *"in my opinion, a child with special needs, needs more hours than what they spend in the playroom"*. It was her opinion that there was little correlation between the amount of hours needed for planning and the number of 'support' hours that were allocated.

Of concern were also the remaining children in the playroom and the level of attention and care they received, or rather did not receive. One participant confided *"you just don't have the time to do everything you want and can't do everything you think should be done. You get discouraged"*. At one point, she conceded that she considered resigning *"…because it is only my workplace and I have a life…it was just too stressful"*.

Lack of uniformity

Participants were also aware that practices in their own playrooms were not reflective of practices carried out in other playrooms within the same kindergarten. The lack of uniformity from playroom to playroom was suggested as creating a sense of confusion regarding the direction as to which approach was best suited to them. With no uniform guidelines, each playroom was required to 'trial and error' different strategies to find one that best suited their needs. One participant stated *"I wish the other playrooms could go through the same process [as we did], but I don't make those decisions, but I wish for it to be like that"*. She explains *"it is purely coincidence and [of course] reliant upon the person who has responsibility for the playroom, the Supervisor"*.

Lack of supervision

Supervision from within the kindergarten and from outside services was also deemed to be lacking by many of the participants. Many participants felt that at times it was difficult to work with auxiliary services connected to the child/ren with special needs due to the lack of

available meeting times, lack of information afforded to individual playrooms, and lack of specialised advice and guidance. Whilst not entirely dissatisfied with the level of contact with auxiliary services, there was an expectation by several of the participants that the channels of communication would be more open.

As both kindergartens were located regionally, participants were aware that services afforded to their individual kindergartens were based upon the resources of their local councils. In particular Support Pedagogues and Supervisors were aware of the lack of both internal and external support, supervision and advice available to them. The lack of specialised advice and supervision was felt by some participants as devaluing the work and the service they provided. It was suggested by one participant that offering a specialised service to Supports and in particular Supports that did not have tertiary qualifications was necessary if work practices were to be improved. One participant was resigned to the fact *that "when you live in a village you need to be creative"*, as an explanation to the lack of services.

Unstable support hours

One last issue that was seen as a barrier to cooperative working practices in the playroom was the terms of contract for support hours. As stated by several of the participants, each contract for support hours was valid for a certain period of time that did not extend beyond a year. Currently each year an application is made to either renew the hours or to review depending upon the needs of the child. In some instances, the period of contract needs to be renewed bi-annually. According to one participant this lack of uncertainty added to the stress level experienced by staff members and created a sense of transience in the playroom. It was noted by some of the participants that this constant state of confusion only disturbed the equilibrium of the playroom. It also signalled an end to the working partnership that many believed that they had worked hard to achieve.

One participant also mentioned that there is constant change in the playroom, with children moving forward in their educational journey. As new children with special needs begin in the playroom, there is a possibility that a new Support is assigned the position. This constant state of change was also mentioned by one participant as being disruptive and presented a challenge to cooperative working.

4.4.2 How cooperative working practices were fostered

Communication, feeling valued as a team member, working strategies were all mentioned as fostering cooperation between staff in the playroom.

Open channels for communication

Working practices based upon open lines of communication seemed to be the most effective method of cooperation for each playroom. Through both informal and formal meetings, information was shared to all staff members in the playroom, as well as parents and with auxiliary services.

Formal playroom meetings were held regularly in which issues regarding children and playroom practices were discussed. Information was shared and goals were set. As one participant *stated "we talked mostly about what works best and what didn't work"*. Another participant added *"…we involved everyone in the playroom, so that everybody heard the same message and worked towards the same goals"*. Working towards common goals was seen as important for the sake of all of the children in the playroom. One participant specified *"it is important that everyone takes the same stance…and keeps the same intention with the same rules and regulations…otherwise it confuses children"*.

Meetings with parents and auxiliary services involved the Supervisor and the Support when appropriate. Regular contact was seen as important to developing a close working relationship between home and the kindergarten and auxiliary services.

Team membership

Feeling valued as an integral part of a team was mentioned as facilitating cooperative working practices. This was enhanced with opinions and suggestions offered by playroom staff taken into consideration, grievances addressed, and responsibilities shared. One participant stated *"we try to [harness] the positive qualities in each staff member and capitalise upon that"*. Another participant felt that her years of experience were appreciated by saying *"…I felt I was heard…I have worked many more years [in referring to her Supervisor] and although I don't have the same education, it was worth something"*. One participant felt that in her playroom being part of a team meant accepting people's differences. She conceded, *"of course not everyone is the same, but in this particular playroom it has worked really well, because one is*

allowed to say one's opinion and help make the decisions". It was her hope that the end result was satisfaction for everyone.

Being part of the team and assuming responsibility was also mentioned by several participants as a necessary part of workplace cooperation. When situations occurred that warranted 'stepping in', it was an expectation that any staff member close to the situation could attend and possibly resolve the incident. There was an expectation that shared responsibility for not only the child with special needs, but all of the children in the playroom was assumed equally by the staff.

Active management

It was felt in both playrooms that the role of the kindergarten management was also important to staff cohesion and cooperation. Management that took an active role and interest in supporting decisions, offering supervision and keeping staff informed was positively received. One participant admitted, *" I have always informed the Director about everything that is happening, what we are doing and why we are doing it…so s/he usually hear all my frustrations…[and] s/he responds accordingly"*. One participant acknowledged *"when you have kindergarten leadership that understands [and sees the issues]…you don't feel alone. Yes, I can say that I have felt that the kindergarten management team have supported us all the way through this process"*.

Work schedules

Lastly, all participants noted the importance of working with some educational structures in place. Working within a structured weekly/monthly program, was thought to provide stability to the children, particularly the children with special needs and allowed staff to rotate duties and tasks. One participant admitted that this alleviated workplace stress as it *"was decided it was too stressful for one person to be with any one particular child all the time … [as] it was neither good for me nor the child"*.

A number of barriers relating to collaboration were identified by participants that regarding educational requirements, training and experience, workplace structures and supervision. Whilst these barriers were experienced by a number of participants, a number of issues

relating to the facilitation of collaborative work practices were also stated to be taking place in the playroom. These included the encouragement of team membership and ownership, open channels of communication, structured planning and the active involvement of kindergarten management.

4.5 Inclusive practices

Specific questions regarding inclusion were not asked of the participants, however through their answers of other questions, it was possible to see how each group of participants worked through the inclusive process within the playroom.

4.5.1 Providing support

For the three groups of participants, the underlying principle for inclusion meant providing an environment that catered for all of the children. Inclusion for the Supervisors entailed providing support for the entire playroom through additional staffing and staffing hours; implementing specific strategies and practices in the playroom; and creating a sense of belonging and acceptance for staff and children. In order to achieve this one Supervisor felt she needed to create a structured environment that addressed the "*imbalance in the working equilibrium of the playroom"* that she felt was lacking.

Similarly the Supports understood their role as one of support for the entire playroom. The focus of this support differed for each Pedagogue Support. For one Support this meant focusing on the needs of the staff by providing extra staffing hours and staff member. By doing so, it was felt that by the sheer number of actual staff in the playroom guaranteed that each child was physically 'seen'.

Assistants were also aware that the nature of support was to provide extra physical and practical staff hours in the playroom. One Assistant understood the situation as, the *"[Support] wasn't attached to a child but came to help in the playroom"*. It was also understood by the Assistants that children with special needs in this case weren't seen to be singled out as requiring the extra 'help'. One Assistant saw the advantage of having a Support in the classroom as providing reassurance that the child/ren were not forgotten or 'lost' in the crowd. This seemed to be an important issues as the Assistant then asked rhetorically *"who will keep an eye on [the child] today so that s/he is not forgotten?"* One

Supervisor communicated the procedure by stating *"... we divide ourselves amongst the classroom and we all work with the child with special needs".* This was done through structured group work and scheduling the staff roster to ensure certain days were well 'manned'.

The term 'inclusion' was only used by two participants, a Supervisor and a Support throughout their interviews; however practical examples given throughout all of the participant interviews indicated that inclusion was taking place.

4.5.2 Staff inclusion

Throughout the participant interviews, it was apparent that each kindergarten playroom was attempting to create a unified team, working for the benefit of all of the children. This was done using regular meetings, debriefing and leaving the lines of communication open to address conflicts and offer praise and encouragement.

During the regular meetings, Supervisors noted that all staff members were invited to be part of the decision making process with regards to strategizing, planning and implementing goals for the playroom. In particular Supervisors reported that they were unified as a team in working with the child with special needs, the parents and the other children in the playroom. This included creating educational plans and goals for the child/ren with special needs. Staff were regularly informed and kept up to date about meetings with parents and auxiliary services.

Having been newly qualified as Pedagogues, both Supervisors were keenly aware that in order to facilitate the inclusive process, it was important not to make a distinction between the Support and the other staff in the playroom. It was also important to the Supervisors that the child/ren that needed extra support were unaware of the role of the Pedagogue Support and equally important that the 'other' children in the playroom remained unaware of that role. One Supervisor made note *that "there was no child that felt that that was my support"*. Another added, *"the children didn't notice that she was a Support, rather that she was another member of staff"*.

4.5.3 Accepting differences

Understanding inclusion and the inclusive process was evident in the ways in which each Support described their daily working practices. Essentially this involved the understanding of both Supports that *"children are so different and they need to be handled differently"*. One Support added *"when you have a child with special needs, even those children can be so different and their needs are therefore different"*.

The focus for the other Support rested upon how the playroom accommodated to the needs of the child/ren with special needs. She understood her role as that of Facilitator, with the belief that children with special needs *"need to be part of a group, with room in the community… [the child] is here and there shall be a place for them in this world, and a place in this playroom"*. Regarding 'inclusion', she goes on to pose the question *"should we take them away [the children with special needs] and make them fit better [in the playroom] so they can sit still. What is it really about?"* The Support explained that her goal was not to change the child with special needs but that *"…other children learnt what it is like to be different and accept that difference"*.

4.5.4 Identifying barriers to inclusion

Within their positions, both Supports were able to identify possible barriers to inclusion. As both Supports had previously held positions as Pedagogue Supports in the past, they believed they had a frame of reference to their own present working practices. One of the particular barriers to inclusion experienced by Supports was the lack of uniformity that existed in the kindergarten.

Different procedures for different playrooms

Both Supports were aware that the way in which their respective playrooms operated using 'support hours' was not the same for other playrooms within the same kindergarten. In playrooms where a child was diagnosed as having a 'disability' and needed practical support with attending therapy of a kind e.g. Speech therapy, then the Support was directly responsible for those tasks. One Support recounted her experience of another Support, *"she [was] on her own with the child all the time and [was] not inspired to do anything more and she didn't get any feedback from the other staff members"*. It was also remarked *"it is often*

pure coincidence and reliant upon the person who has responsibility, the Supervisor [of the playroom]".

Overburdened by responsibility

Supports also mentioned it wasn't always natural or automatic that responsibility for the child/ren with special needs was assumed by other staff members. One Support experienced other staff members retreating in certain situations. She felt in these negative situations she needed to remind the other staff members that they worked as a team and she *"couldn't do everything"*.

Staffing hours were also mentioned as having a negative impact upon the inclusive process. The opinion of one Support was that the ratio of support hours allocated and funded to the playroom was out of proportion to the number of potential hours the child attends the kindergarten. She gave the example of *"a child attending kindergarten for 40 hours may only receive 35 [support] hours but requires 60 hours"*. The latter figure she conceded included planning and structuring individual programs and actual staff labour. She admitted that as a result she had a 'bad conscience' for the other children she feels may have been overlooked.

Barriers to inclusion that were experienced directly by the Supports related to the lack of uniformity that existed in working practices within the kindergarten and overburden of responsibility. Whilst Supports reported that these situations were experienced, they did not believe it represented their entire experience in the playroom.

4.6 Summary of Findings

4.6.1 Role Expectation

Participants were questioned about the role expectations of the Support working in their playroom and how that differed or was similar to their own role. The role expectations of the Support were based upon the level of knowledge and skills possessed by the Support. Roles that were assumed by the Support and attributed by their co-workers included Facilitator acting as a mediator between the child and other staff members, between the kindergarten and

home and between the kindergarten and outside services; as an additional staff member, providing support physically to the child and the playroom as an extra pair of hands; and lastly as a team member, an integral part of the educational team providing services to all children.

4.6.2 Role Responsibilities

Participants were questioned about the explicit and the attributed responsibilities assumed by the Support in the playroom. Questions were also posed about how those responsibilities matched, differed or overlapped their own responsibilities in the playroom and towards the child/ren with special needs.

Similarly to role expectations, responsibilities were based on the knowledge and skill set of the Support. Those responsibilities ranged from sharing responsibility in goal setting to facilitation, conflict resolution, and supervision through the sharing of information.

4.6.3 Competency in the Playroom

Participants were questioned regarding the level of competency they had in the playroom and the expected competencies of the Support. Questions were also posed to the level of training, skill development offered and undertaken by the participants. In addition they were asked how this affected working practices in the playroom.

Results indicate that all participants believe formal qualifications are necessary in working as a Support within the playroom. In the absence of qualifications, it was an expectation that training and information be offered as part of skill development to increase workplace competency.

4.6.4 Collaborative working practices

Participants were asked to describe and comment about how collaboration was fostered or hindered in their respective playrooms. Participants mentioned a number of factors hindering the collaborative process between staff members; these included, a lack of formal qualifications by staff; lack of working experience in the area of special needs education; lack

of adequate training opportunities; responsibility overload; lack of uniformity in playroom settings; lack of adequate supervision and the instable nature of the support hours.

Participants also commented on their experiences when collaboration was fostered in the playroom. Participants mentioned open forums for communication; belonging to a team; playroom structuring and a kindergarten management that took an interactive approach all contributed to creating a collaborative environment.

4.6.5 Inclusive practices

Participants were not asked specific questions regarding inclusive practices; however responses reflected how inclusive practices were incorporated and featured within the playroom. Participants also reflected upon issues that hindered that process.

Participants believed that staff inclusion and the acceptance of the difference between both child and adult enabled inclusive practices to be carried out. This was reflected in the way they described daily activities, workplace structures and personal attitudes. Participants found the barriers to inclusion lay in the lack of uniformity between playrooms and the overburden of responsibility as major factors.

5 Discussion

Chapter 5 takes an ethic perspective and discusses the findings in relation to the research questions that were initially posed. The first part of the chapter will focus on relating theory, the relevant literature and the findings into context with what is seen to be existing or experienced in practice today.

5.1 Relating the findings to theory and literature

5.1.1 How do Pedagogue Supports perceive their role in relation to task and responsibilities in the Kindergarten playroom?

Knowledge and education were major influences in determining how each of the Supports perceived their own role and responsibilities within the playroom. The differences in their perceptions and expectations appeared to be based upon a theoretical understanding and a moral understanding of inclusive practice. This was evident in the way each Support articulated their own understanding of that position and the work goals they set forth for themselves.

For the Support with formal qualifications, work practices were based upon a theoretical framework using the foundations of early childhood development and inclusion. Her own expectations and perceptions relied heavily upon what she had learnt throughout her Pedagogical education and to a lesser extent working experiences. The Support without formal qualification's framework was built upon a moral understanding of fairness and equity developed from years of work and personal experiences with children. This was based upon an attitudinal perspective in contrast to the formally qualified Support whose perspective was based upon knowledge.

Each Support understood and perceived their role as the instrument of inclusion for the child/ren with special needs in the playroom; it was their frame of reference that differed. The difference in role perception could be explained by applying the Knowledge, Skills and

Attitude model, which describes competency or mastery as the comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and the evaluation of knowledge (Athanassiou, et. al., 2003; Granello, 2008).

In addition, role perception seems to have been influenced by the lack of clear and specific guidelines into the role function and expectations of Supports. Both Supports indicated that there were no clear guidelines or instructions into their specific roles or responsibilities in the playroom. Research shows that a lack of guidelines can result in role confusion and role ambiguity when Supports are left to 'figure' things out for themselves (Biddle, 1986; Butt & Lowe, 2011; Dierdorff & Morgenson, 2007; Giangreco, et. al., 2010; Howard & Ford, 2007; Hughes & Valle- Riestra, 2008; Lieber, et. al., 1997; Ratcliff, et. al., 2011). In many instances throughout the interviews, Supports admitted that they did what they thought was necessary or were instructed to do through staff meetings without clear direction or consistent planning. Research conducted by Egilson and Traustadottir's (2009) found the same was occurring in Icelandic schools, with Supports often taking on tasks and responsibilities without effective or constructive supervision.

The perception and the assumption of roles by the Support can be related to Bronfenbrenner's notion of embeddedness (1979), in that the roles the Supports chose were dependent upon the context or situations they were in and the people they were working with. This explanation reinforces the differentiation in the Supports perceptions as mentioned earlier and supports the assertion by Dierdorff and Morgenson (2007) that people can hold the same role and work it in varying degrees.

Throughout the interviews, it emerged that the Supports perceived and assumed three main roles. There appeared to be a fourth role, however this was only assumed by one of the Supports. The first role and significantly the main role was one of 'additional support' and assistance to the playroom. While this role was one of assistance, the way in which it was rationalised differed for each of the Supports. One Support felt her role was to assist in the inclusive process of the child/ren with special needs. In doing so it was her role to ensure that the process was as seamless as possible. She felt her role was one of mentorship and supervision, ensuring that the other staff members shared and owned the responsibility of inclusion. The Support's perceived role was to educate the other staff and children in understanding and embracing the differences between individuals.

A second role to emerge for the Support was that of Facilitator. Each Support assumed the role of Facilitator differently. One Support saw her role as facilitating inclusion by 'being' the extra staff member in the playroom. Her role was seen to be inclusive of all children, without highlighting those that required more attention. The support she provided was embedded in the daily activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), so that a number of children could benefit, not just the child/ren that needed the support. The basis of this was that 'maybe another child could benefit from the same activity/process' as the child with special needs. Inclusion occurred by actively preventing the child with special needs having 'exclusive' treatment.

The other Support facilitated as a 'Connector' (Chopra, et. al., 2004). She liaised within the kindergarten and with others outside the kindergarten. Her role as a contact person connected her to the other staff members in the playroom and kindergarten, with families and with outside services such as Sernám. The role of facilitation was at times found by the Supports to create a barrier between the other playroom staff members and the child. This was highlighted when one Support acknowledged that she felt that some of the other staff 'stepped' back at certain times and in certain situations. Rutherford (2011) found that such instances worked contrary to the inclusive process, by unwittingly excluding children with special needs, but featured commonly for Supports.

The third role, was that of team member in the playroom. Each Support felt they were part of a team providing care and education to all of the children. Research indicates that often Supports feel undervalued and underappreciated in the team situation (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009); however both Supports overwhelmingly felt that their contributions were invaluable in achieving educational goals within the playroom. When asked if there existed a 'them and us' mentality in the playroom, one Support insisted that she felt no distinction was made or her position belittled by her co- workers. According to Ratcliff et. al., (2011), such feelings of validation are important when creating strong working relationships and lead to positive working practices.

The fourth and last role assumed only by one Support was that of Conflict manager. The Support felt that this was one of her main roles in the initial stages of employment. She felt that it was her responsibility to resolve and manage the conflicts that arose in the playroom involving the child/ren with special needs. As time went by, and with her concerted efforts, the level of responsibility lessened and that of her co-workers increased. Towards the end of

the contracted period for support hours, the Support felt that this role was now shared equally with her co-workers.

The second Support admitted she was also involved in conflict management, but did not see this as her 'role'. It was her perception that she assisted in resolving the conflicts, but her role was minor in comparison to the other staff members. It was her belief that being 'untrained' she intervened only when she saw a physical threat to another child. Research has shown that there is an over dependence made upon many Supports working in educational settings to take on the role of behaviour management (Bourke, 2009; Butt & Lowe, 2011; Ratcliff, et. al., 2011). The concern raised in this research was that Supports had little training and lacked skills or knowledge in order to undertake any type of behaviour management (ibid.). The Support in question had not received any training in behaviour management, but addressed each situation 'on the spot' and as she saw appropriate. Generally both Supports felt validated in the roles that each had assumed, believing they were integral members with valid contributions to make. Both Supports reported taking an active role in playroom meetings and developing open constructive channels for communication with their co- workers.

In terms of responsibility, one Support's focal point rested on the child/ren with special needs. In line with her role, she felt her responsibilities lay in being extra vigilant in ensuring that the needs of the child/ren were met by all of the staff in the playroom. According to the Support, it was not her job to individually 'support' the child, but to encourage and facilitate the inclusive process within the playroom. Similarly, the other Support did not see her primary role as focusing on the needs of a particular child, but to provide extra 'hands' to the playroom. The sense of responsibility differed in that unlike her counterpart, it did not extend to 'encouraging' or 'instructing' her co-workers how to assist in the inclusive process. Creating and instilling a sense of responsibility within oneself and in co-workers is an important aspect of team development. It could be suggested that the way in which the first Support assumed her responsibilities centred on active engagement, by inspiring her co-workers in undertaking a similar role to herself (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The roles and responsibilities that each Support perceived of themselves were similar in many respects, nonetheless differences in understanding those roles and responsibilities were also obvious. Both Supports appeared to have worked in playrooms that validated their positions and the contributions that they brought forth and shared. The obvious difference that may have impacted upon their self-perceptions was the level of education and experience of each

of the Supports. Nevertheless, the microsystemic influence of the playroom coupled with the influence of aspects of role theory seemed to have shaped each Supports self- perception of the individual roles and responsibilities they adopted.

5.1.2 How do co-workers perceive the role of Pedagogue Supports in relation to tasks and responsibilities in the Kindergarten playroom?

The findings indicated that the co-workers had similar role perceptions and expectations of the Support. Supports were perceived as having the role of 'support', providing the extra assistance with their physical presence and in staffing hours. They were also perceived as valued and contributing team members in the playroom. Lastly, there was an expectation that they would play an active role in behaviour management.

As found with the self-perceptions of Supports of their own roles and responsibilities, the level of education was pivotal in how they were perceived by their co-workers and the responsibilities they were assigned. For the Supervisors, a higher degree of qualifications appeared to be related to a greater number of roles being assigned to the Support leading in turn to a greater number of tasks needing to be undertaken. Such an example highlights the existence of social hierarchy mentioned in Chapter 2 (Bach, et. al., 2006; Burgess & Shelton Mayes, 2007; Mehan, 1993). What emerged that was dissimilar to the research for these particular Supports, was that they were not being assigned responsibilities that their Supervisors felt they were under qualified to perform (Giangreco, et. al., 2010). For example, the Support without qualifications was not expected to initiate contact with outside services nor instigate nor take the lead in planning, writing or implementing educational goals for the child/ren with special needs.

The expectations and responsibilities for Supports with qualifications, ranged from goal setting, strategy implementation to meeting attendance and above all informing co-workers. Informing co-workers either through information, mentoring or supporting was high on both Supervisors and Assistants priority lists.

Similarly to the Supports, both Supervisors and Assistants perceived them as having a supplementary role in the playroom. The role was considered integral in not only providing structural support for the inclusion of the child/ren with special needs, but also necessary in

ensuring that the ‘other’ children were not excluded in that process. Examples were given of group activities that were organised based upon the interest of different children. One Assistant likened this role as stress relief for the other staff members, meaning that the presence of the Support alleviated the added emotional pressure that having a child with special needs in the playroom brought. The Assistant described this as the pressure of the situation, rather than the child themselves as being stressful. In many documented situations, Supports have been used in this manner to lessen the pressure for teachers and in classrooms (Rutherford, 2011).

In addition to the supplementary role of the Support, there was a consideration that the Support was part of the ‘team’. Both Supervisors and Assistants had an expectation that the Support would work well with the other team members attending to the same issues and tasks within the playroom. The working relationship was very important to one Assistant who mentioned that it was necessary for the Support to ‘fit’ into the playroom. This idea of ‘fitting in’ relied on the social nature and the personality of the Support and her ability to communicate and interact with her co-workers. The value placed upon the Support by her co-workers was felt to be reinforced when the Assistant stated, “she is one of us”, meaning she was part of the team. Bourke (2009) suggests, the importance of including the Support in service delivery strengthens the collaborative process and provides the Supports a valued position within the playroom. Supports in this sense are valued as ‘major stakeholders’ by their co-workers (ibid.). In order to appreciate, respect and acknowledge Supports, Giangreco, et. al. (2001, p. 486) believe role clarification, supervision, support and training opportunities need to replace the friendly words and “pats on the back” offered to them.

Chiaburu and Harrison (2008, p. 1083) emphasise the importance the *“different valences of influence”* by the co-workers have upon the Supports role. On the contrary and by tenets of the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), Supports are also able to influence their co-workers in a similar way through their own actions and work ethics.

One role assigned to Supports by themselves and Assistants was one of behaviour management. Neither Supervisor mentioned that conflict resolution was a responsibility of the Support, however this was mentioned by one of the Assistants. The general understanding in both playrooms by all staff was that responsibility was to be shared amongst the staff members. As mentioned previously in the findings about Support perceptions, shared responsibility of the child/ren with special needs was an instructional aim. It was mentioned

by both Supervisors that this was an issue that they wished to instil in the minds of every staff member. However, the findings suggest that whilst this was the general refrain, not every staff member was of the same opinion. One Support felt that this role was assigned to her, whilst one Assistant admittedly 'stepped back' in conflict situations. In this instance, the Support's perception of her role was heightened in the withdrawal of the Assistant (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). It could be suggested that the Assistant felt less 'experienced', less 'qualified' or perhaps felt that behaviour management was not her responsibility which resulted in her withdrawing from the conflict. In contrast, the Assistant perhaps felt the Support was better qualified or had more experience in tackling such matters. Biddle (1986) relates this to 'consensus' in which individuals have specific expectations of their co-workers and then expect them to fulfil those expectations. Either wittingly or unwittingly, by the Assistant's actions in stepping back, it reinforced in her mind and in the mind of the Support, that the Support needed to 'step in' to resolve that particular situation. Regardless of this admission, the Assistant was adamant that she maintained shared responsibility of the child/ren with special needs with the Support and the staff members in the playroom.

The role perception of Supports by both their co-workers seemed on par with the perception they had of themselves. These included the roles of additional support, team member, a source for information and behaviour manager.

5.1.3 What impact does role perception have on collaborative working practices in the Kindergarten playroom?

As it has been discussed earlier in this chapter (see 5.1.2 and 5.1.3) it is reasonable to argue that collaborative working practices were influenced by the perceptions of the Support's role and responsibility in the playroom. Participant's responses have shown that a number of factors both foster and hinder the process of collaboration in their individual working environments. The factors were found to be interactive of one another and did not exist interdependently. Many of the examples given by participants replicate several factors at once, rather than a single isolated factor.

Many of the participants offered both positive and negative views to the factors that were discussed. Participants did not provide 'either' 'or' answers, but provided many examples of how collaboration was fostered or hindered. In order to provide a balanced view, the way in

which collaboration was seen to be fostered will be discussed first, followed by factors that hindered collaboration.

How collaboration was fostered

A number of factors were found to influence and foster collaborative working practices. These included open communication, team membership, and supervision. Many of these factors occurred intuitively while others were mediated by the playroom staff.

Open channels of communication seemed to be paramount for the successful collaboration and cooperation between the Support and the other staff members (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hudson & Glomb, 1997). Through continual and organised exchanges of ideas, information, goals, strategies, issues were discussed in open forums in which all members of the playroom were present. As mentioned, one of the perceived roles of the Support was one of 'connector' (Chopra, et. al., 2004; Mansaray, 2006; Sandberg & Ottoson, 2010) The communication through informal 'chats' with parents and co-workers were said to be particularly useful in relaying important information about issues or events that occurred. The effectiveness of these informal 'chats' lay in the fact that they occurred not only daily, but throughout the day. Information was asked, suggested and even clarified by co-workers and Supports alike. In addition, it was stated that the lines of communication between home and the kindergarten were kept open, with parents being informed about their child in the spirit of reciprocation.

Team membership was also discussed as being essential to co-operative practices (Giangreco, et. al., 2010). Feelings of being a team member echoed amongst the participants, further emphasising the efforts described by each of the Supervisors to involve all the playroom staff members. One Supervisor described the necessity in seeing the value each individual staff member brought to the playroom and seeing the opportunities it created (Takala, 2007). This can be directly linked back to work competency described in Chapter 2. As Westera (2001) pointed out, by understanding one's own perceptions, one can see the value that another individual can offer, especially in a team orientated challenges.

This was further described in one playroom in which group activities were part of the daily routine. Supervisors placed individual staff members in activities that were reflective of their strengths and interests. Working as a team also provided opportunities for mentorship, with co-workers learning from each other drawing upon previous knowledge and experience (Butt

& Lowe, 2011). During the interviews, a number of the participants commented upon their lack of formal education, but felt that their contributions stemmed from their years of work experience. In this sense, the experience in working with children and not necessarily the qualifications were embraced as an asset to the team.

The last factor that emerged relating directly to collaboration centred on mediated supervision. Participants voiced how important it was to not only have a playroom Supervisor and kindergarten management that heard their concerns and responded accordingly, but also work structures in place so that the their needs and the needs of all the children were met. This was especially felt by the Supports. Research indicates that by providing supervision to Supports and their co-workers, the Supervisor can create a positive work environment that instils empowerment and validates their roles in the playroom (Daniels & McBride, 2001; Jones, et. al., 2012). One Support stated she felt empowered and encouraged with the support she received from both her Supervisor and Kindergarten director. Both Assistants and Supervisors agreed that supervision was necessary and influenced the way in which they reviewed their positions.

In order to orchestrate these work structures, participants felt it was necessary for kindergarten management to take a proactive interest in what they were doing, and how they were doing it (Takala, 2007; Rutherford, 2011). While the majority of participants felt that structures in place within the playroom eg. group work and staff work schedules worked well, there was a resounding disappointment with supervision offered by outside services.

Obstacles that hindered collaboration

Despite participants proclaiming that they worked well as a team, many were aware and mentioned factors that impacted negatively upon the collaborative process. Four factors that were consistently raised on an individual and organisational level included a lack of skills and knowledge, lack of training opportunities, lack of adequate supervision and a lack of continuity in the support offered to a child with special needs. Similar to the factors facilitating collaborative practices, these issues did not occur in isolated incidents, but rather interactively, with each impinging upon the other.

On an individual level, Supports lacking the necessary skills seemed to be a point of concern expressed by a few of the participants. This deficit in experience and formal education was

thought to negatively impact upon work practices, with tasks and responsibilities carried out by individuals with little to no understanding of fundamental child development or inclusive practice (Butt & Lowe, 2011; Giangreco, et. al., 2010; Ratcliff, et. al., 2011). When concerns were raised about the lack of qualifications and experience an individual possessed, a few participants expressed strong views against using unqualified staff in kindergarten playrooms. While it was accepted as a reality, the participants believed that for best practices, only qualified staff should be employed.

On an organisational level, lack of professional development has also been shown to hinder collaborative working practices in the playroom (Daniels & Mc Bride, 2001). It was reported by the Supports and the Supervisors that professional development through training programs or courses are not offered to Supports or available in any context. For Supports that are qualified, the one concession that enables them to carry out their work is the tertiary training and learning they undertook in their undergraduate Pedagogy degree. Supports not qualified in pedagogy, are disadvantaged as no information or training courses are available to offer skills based training that is specific to working with children with special needs.

In both cases, often the experience of working with a child with special needs is learnt 'on the job' and learnt through 'trial and error' (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009). Research indicates, that this is a problem across the board for Supports both in kindergartens and schools (Bourke, 2009; Butt & Lowe, 2011; Giangreco, et. al., 2001, 2010; Howard & Ford, 2007; Hughes & Valle-Riestra, 2008; Tompkins, et. al., 2012).

As mentioned previously, a lack of adequate supervision has also been shown to hinder the collaborative process. The lack of supervision entails two main aspects, the first of Supports not being given the appropriate amount of supervision and secondly, Supervisors themselves not adequately skilled or experienced in providing the necessary supervision.

Lack of supervision within the playroom was not a major issue for the Supports; however one Support did allude to feelings alone in shouldering the responsibility for all issues and matters relating to the child/ren with special needs in the playroom. Research has indicated that a questionable amount of responsibilities are often allocated and assumed by Supports who in turn undertake the tasks without being given adequate supervision (Butt & Lowe, 2011; Giangreco, et. al., 2001). Research conducted by Egilson & Traustadottir (2009) and Ratcliff,

et. al. (2011) found that limited time or lack of supervision led to communication breakdowns and ultimately poor collaboration between the Support, their Supervisor and their co-workers.

When Supports were questioned about what support was afforded to them, both were hard pressed to provide an answer. Both Supports felt they were given adequate supervision from their respective Supervisors with information and guidance, however on a larger scale felt little was offered that was specific to their role as a Support. This was a view that was shared by several of the participants who felt overall supervision and guidance was lacking from services outside the kindergarten (Burgess & Shelton Mayes, 2007). It was felt that the area of special needs was so vast they needed both direction and confirmation that the work they were doing was productive and in the best interests for both children and the playroom.

One last issue that was not given as much significance by participants, but was mentioned, was the instability in the support granted to children with special needs. In particular the lack of sufficient support hours and the short term contracting for support were blamed for creating stress and role overload. Participants mentioned the lack of support hours awarded to the playroom needed for planning inclusive strategies far outweighed the number of hours used in reality (Harry, 2001, cited in Travers, 2006; McCarthy, 2001 cited in Travers, 2006). In addition the nature of the support contract did not involve any permanency, so that Supports were employed in that position for a short amount of time. These issues while not specifically explored in the current research are issues that are significant and relevant within the Faroese perspective and impact upon collaborative practices.

5.2 Key Findings and Considerations

5.2.1 Role perception does influence collaborative practices in the playroom.

In this study, role perception was found to influence collaborative practices. However, the study also highlighted the importance in recognising the impact role perception has on competency building which forms a part of collaboration. Role theory suggests that the superficial perception others have on an individual ultimately shapes the way they in which they perceive themselves. To a certain extent individuals are influenced and modify their own behaviour to fit a ‘stereotype’ as research has indicated (Butt & Lowe, 2011) however the

results of this study suggests that role perception is dependent upon more than just about what other people think about an individual.

The issues explored in this study of role perception, collaboration and competency sees the interrelation and mutual dependence they have upon each other. This study highlighted the fact that each of these issues cannot be explored without understanding the impact the other issues place upon it. In the same way that role perception is impacted upon by individual competency and collaborative practices, competency and collaboration are equally influenced by an individual's role perception.

The key understanding of the importance role perception has on competency building and collaboration lies in individuals, including the Support, focusing on the strengths and the positive aspects each can bring to a successful working relationship. Knowing the impact role perception has on an individual, can aid in teaching and learning of the Support through mediated and interactive learning with co-workers.

Collaboration has been shown to be important if inclusion is to take place in the playroom. Collaboration necessitates generating a positive role perception of all staff members of themselves and of others, not just the Support. By creating this, the follow on effect towards the inclusive process impacts directly upon the children in the playroom including the child with special needs.

The ecological systems model offered by Bronfenbrenner (1979) can assist in our understanding the phenomena of the Support within the playroom. In its combination with role theory (Biddle, 1986; Dierdorff & Morgeson, 2007) we gain an understanding into how the Support 'sees' themselves, how that impacts upon other's perception of them in the playroom, and in turn how this influences the working relationship they share with their fellow co- workers.

The role perceptions and expectations of the Support had a direct impact upon what was expected in their contribution to workplace practices. Whilst the measures of those expectations were not being measured, their influence on collaboration was being explored. As mentioned previously, one Support was aware of the mentoring and supervision she was giving to her fellow co-workers and the impact this had upon work practices. The second Support whilst not mentoring her co-workers was in fact the mentee, receiving mentorship

and supervision from her Supervisor and co-workers. From the responses of all the participants, the nature of their expectations of the Support, were directly related to the Support's level of education and knowledge. The greater amount of knowledge and education of the Support, the higher the expectations that they would initiate the collaborative process. This also worked in the reverse, the lower the level of knowledge and education of the Support, the lesser expectations that they would initiate the collaborative process. The expectations in fact were they would be directed along with their co-workers.

5.2.2 Implications for the Faroe Islands

This study provides a glimpse into the situation faced by Supports working in Faroese kindergartens. Some of the main issues highlighted in this study focused on the lack of uniformity and general guidelines on the functionality of Supports, the lack of clarity in role expectations for the Support working in the playroom and the lack of training programs in providing skill development in the area of special needs.

It is necessary that national guidelines regarding the functionality and employment of Supports be developed, so that a national standard, governs kindergarten practice. Each municipality would therefore be responsible in implementing those standards within their respective kindergartens. By creating uniform standards applicable for all Supports working in the playroom context, pedagogical support practices ensure inclusive measures dictated by the Day-care Services law (2000; 2006) are followed. The development of uniform national guidelines for Supports in kindergartens would begin to address the issue of role expectations, role requirements and role confusion for the Support and their Supervisor and their co-workers in the playroom.

In addition to creating national standard guidelines, Kindergartens need to focus on developing training programs that provide competency based training for Supports in the areas of special needs and disabilities. Two key issues discussed by all participants was the lack of information regarding special needs and disabilities and the opportunities to gain specialised knowledge in that area. This is particularly important for Supports holding no formal qualifications in both child pedagogy and special needs education. Supports with formal qualifications in child pedagogy may also require further training and information regarding special needs education and disability.

By providing training opportunities and information sessions, Kindergartens empower individual employees and build a competent skilled Support workforce. With skill acquisition, Kindergartens can create mentoring programs in which skills are taught through mediated activity also leading to competency building in their co-workers. This is fundamental to creating common understanding and a joint vision within the playroom. In addition it highlights a commitment by the Kindergarten and the municipal council, to the inclusion of all children with special needs and their families into their home community.

5.2.3 Possibilities for future research

Many of the issues found in this study related to role perception, competency and collaboration cross geographical boundaries and can be seen in both kindergarten and school contexts around the world. At present, documented study in the educational context of kindergarten is not well publicised. Further research in this area would create a greater pool of information regarding the issues affecting Supports. In particular, possibilities for future research could extend and include the other Nordic countries whose kindergarten system bears similarities to the Faroese kindergarten system. An international comparative study of the Support phenomena in countries such Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland, could provide contextual information that directly relates to the use of Supports in kindergartens and investigate the link to collaborative working practices in the playroom. Such a study could cast perspective on the educational qualifications and training structures; workplace and supervisory networks surrounding Supports.

5.2.4 Reflections

The findings in this research cannot be generalised to the larger population, as the sample of participants interviewed represents only a fraction of the population of early childhood educators. In addition, being conducted in the Faroe Islands it may not be representative of other international early educational settings. It does however; provide a glimpse into a sub-group of early childhood educators that is yet to be widely researched and can be found in many Faroese kindergartens.

With this in mind, it is therefore necessary to put into place structures to allow specialised training programmes or short courses that allow such workers the opportunity and the knowledge and surrounding safety network around them in order to undertake such

responsibilities. By empowering individuals through education and information we not only strengthen our workforce, but we create richer and nurturing learning environments for our children.

Furthermore, as proponents of inclusive education advocate for the use of trained professionals in the kindergarten it is important to remember that there will always be untrained and unqualified childcare workers working in kindergartens in the Faroes, and maybe the rest of the world. Whilst there are arguments for and against their presence, one needs to be realistic about the numbers of qualified pedagogues being churned out of the higher educational institutions. There may never be enough pedagogues to fill the workplace 'slots' and take the position as Supports, leaving the way clear for untrained and unqualified workers. It is therefore important that unqualified workers are provided with a supervisorial system that encourages, trains and qualifies them by assisting them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that increases their and their co-workers competency levels.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide in English

Interview Guide (General questions for everyone)

1. Position?
2. Job status, Pedagogue or Pedagogue Assistant?
3. Years working in Kindergarten?

For Support

1. How long have you been working as a Pedagogue Support?
2. Have you ever held this position before?
3. What training were you offered before taking the position?
4. What training are you offered in this position?
5. Do you have regular scheduled meetings with other staff members? With the Supervising Pedagogue regarding issues relating to the child with special needs?
6. To what extent do you have contact work with other staff in the playroom?
7. To what extent do you feel part of a team in the playroom?
8. Do you provide all contact for the child with special needs?
9. To what extent do other staff members address needs of the child with special needs?
10. What are the specified duties of your job?
11. To what extent do they differ from the work you do daily?
12. Do you have direct contact with the parents of the child with special needs?
13. Do you discuss with Supervising Pedagogue the day's planned activities, or do you just follow their lead?
14. Are issues regarding renewing support contact hours, individualised educational plans or contact with Sernám, the responsibility of you or the Supervising Pedagogue, or is it a joint interaction?

For Pedagogue Supervisor

1. How long have you been in a supervisory role?

2. Have you worked with support pedagogues before?
3. What role expectations does the support Pedagogue play in the playroom?
4. What level of contact do you have with the child with special needs?
5. What level of planning place between you and the support pedagogue?
6. Whose responsibility is it to deal directly with auxiliary services (Sernám, BVT)?
7. Contact/meetings regarding the child with special needs with parents is the responsibility of ?
8. Do you have regular one to one meetings with the support pedagogue?
9. Is the support pedagogue included in regular playroom meetings with co-workers?

For Pedagogue Assistants

1. How long have you been in this position?
2. How do you see the role of Support Pedagogue?
3. How does your role overlap with that of the Support Pedagogue?
4. What is your level of knowledge/experience working with a child with special needs?
5. What expectations do you have for the Support Pedagogue?
6. When working with a child with special needs what do you believe are the responsibilities of the Support Pedagogue compared to yourself?
7. To what extent do you have contact with the parents of the child with special needs?

Appendix 2: Interview guide in Faroese

Vegleiðing til samrøðu (almennir spurningar til øll)

1. kyn
2. starv
3. starvstíð (áramál)

Til stuðulsfólk

1. Hvussu leingi hevur tú arbeitt sum stuðulspersonar?
2. Er hetta fyrstu ferð tú arbeiðir sum stuðulspersonar?
3. Hvørja venjing/útbúgving hevur tú fingið áðrenn tú byrjaði her?
4. Hvørja venjing/útbúgving hevur tú fingið í boði her?
5. Hevur tú regluligar fundir við hini starvsfólkini her? Við leiðandi pedagogin um mál sum viðvíkja børnunum sum hava serligan avbjóðing?
6. Í hvønn mun hevur tú samband við onnur starvsfólk í spælirúminum?
7. Í hvønn mun kennir tú teg sum part av einum toymi í spælirúminum?
8. Ert tað einans tú sum tekur tær av barninum við serligum avbjóðing?
9. Í hvønn mun taka onnur starvsfólk sær av tørvinum hjá barninum við serligum avbjóðing?
10. Hvørjar ábyrgdir fylgja við tínum arbeiði?
11. Í hvønn mun eru hesar ábygdir øðrvísi enn tað arbeiðið sum tú gert til dagligt?
12. Hevur tú beinleiðis samband til foreldrini at barninum við serligum avbjóðing?
13. Hevur tú samrøður við leiðandi pedagokin um tað sum skal henda í dag, ella gert tú bara sum hini?
14. Er tað tú, leiðandi pedagokurin ella tit bæði í felag sum hava ábyrgd av samskiftinum við Sernám um ymisk viðurskifti viðvíkjandi barninum við serligum avbjóðing.

Til leiðandi pedagog

1. Hvussu leingi hevur tú havt leiðandi starv?
2. Hevur tú fyrr/áður arbeitt saman við hjálparfólkum?
3. Hvønn leiklut hevur hjálparfólkið í spælirúminum?
4. Í hvønn mun hevur tú við barnið sum hevur serligan avbjóðing?

5. Í hvønn mun leggja tú og stuðulspersonar ætlanir saman?
6. Hvør hevur ábyrgdina av samskiftinum við Sernám t.d etc
7. Hvør hevur ábyrgdina av at leggja ætlan um fund við foreldrini at barninum við serligum avbjóðing?
8. Hittast tú og stuðulspersonar regluliga undir fýra eygum?
9. Er stuðulspersonar við tá starvsfólkini á stovuna halda fund?

Til pedagog hjálparfólk

1. Hvussu leingir hevur tú havt hetta starvið?
2. Hvussu sært tú tín leiklut?
3. Í hvønn mun hava tú og stuðul sama leiklut?
4. Hvørjar royndir hevur tú við at arbeiða við børnum við serligum avbjóðing?
5. Hvat væntar tú tær av stuðulsperson?
6. Hvørjar tankar hevur tú gjørt tær um arbeiðið hjá stuðulin í mun til títt egna arbeiði?
7. Í hvønn mun hevur tú samband við foreldrini at barninum, sum hevur serligan avbjóðing?
8. Ert tú uppií fundum sum eru millum leiðandi pedagokin og stuðulin (foreldur ella aðrar stovnar)

Til leiðaran fyri dagstovnin

1. Hvørji krøv seta tit til stuðulspersonar sum tit seta í starv?
2. Er tað eitt krav, at stuðulspersonar hevur royndir við líknandi arbeiði áður
3. Geva tit nakran stuðul/informatiónir til stuðulspersonar áðrenn hann/hon byrjar at arbeiða fyri tykkum?
4. Eru tað reglur á tykkara stovni, sum stuðulspersonar eiga at fylgja ímeðan tey arbeiða fyri tykkum?
5. Hava tit tilboð um útbúgving ella venjing eftir at stuðulspersonar er byrjaður í starvi hjá tykkum?
6. Evaluera tit nakrantíð eina starvssetan av einum stuðul, við tí endamáli at bøta um tað sum kemur burturúr?
7. Hvør stuðul er til taks hjá stuðulspersonar til tess at náa settum málum
8. Hevur tú sum leiðari fyri dagstovnin eisini av og á ábyrgd av at hava eftirlit við

stuðulspersonar ella er tað einans leiðandi pedagog sum hevur tað uppgávuna.

Appendix 3: Information letter

Dear Barnagarður Leiðarið,

My name is Natascha Johannesen and I am studying a Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education at the University of Oslo, Norway. As part of my post-graduate studies, I will be undertaking research regarding Support Pedagogues/Assistants (stuðuls) in the kindergarten classroom. My research will focus on Support Pedagogues/Assistants that are employed to work with children assessed (or been evaluated by Sernám as needing additional support. I am interested in the role that Support Pedagogues/Assistants play in the playroom as well as the working relationship they share with their immediate fellow childcare workers (ie. Pedagogues and Pedagogue Assistants).

As part of my research, I will be interviewing a Support Pedagogue/Assistant, their supervising Pedagogue (the Pedagogue that has responsibility of the classroom that the child is attending), a Pedagogue Assistant (working in the same playroom) and lastly the Barnagarður Leiðarið.

Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary and as such you are under no obligations to take part. Volunteers who decide to participate also have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice or reason. All interviews will be conducted with the utmost confidentiality and for the sole purpose of the research project. In addition, all personal data will be anonomised and stored securely. And although this letter is written in English, interviews may be conducted in either English or Føroysk, depending upon the interviewee.

The expected completion of the research project will be June 2013 with all personal data be deleted once the project is completed. Furthermore, in order to follow the ethical guidelines of the University, the project has been submitted to the Norwegian Social Data Service for review.

I believe the role of a Stuðul is an important support for the child with special needs, the kindergarten staff and the playroom. However, little has been documented internationally and nationally about the specific roles and responsibilities of the Stuðul in kindergartens. Much of the research has been based in both primary and secondary school settings and although

parallels can be seen, the learning that takes place in kindergartens forms a unique phenomenon quite dissimilar to schools. Conducting the research in Føroyar provides an opportunity for kindergartens to consider the importance of this job position, clarify the role and responsibilities of individual's undertaking this position from their perspective in order to increase the educational opportunities of children with special needs as part of the early intervention process

If you are interested in taking part in my research, please complete the attached letter of consent and return it to your Leiðarið in the sealed envelope provide by 15 September, 2012.

I may be contacted by the following ways:

[redacted]

For further information or queries regarding the project please contact Jorun Buli-Holmberg, Associate Professor at the Department of Special Needs Education, Oslo University.

[redacted]

Any participation in this research is greatly appreciated by myself and the University of Oslo.

Yours sincerely, Natascha Johannesen

Appendix 4: Letter of Consent

Letter of Consent

I would like to participate in the study, “Role perception of Support Pedagogues working with children with special needs in Faroese Kindergartens”.

I have recieved both oral and written information regarding the study and am aware that participation is voluntary. I am also aware that I am able to withdraw at any time without predjuice or reason.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

Position: .....

Telephone: .....

Email: .....

Appendix 5: Permission (NSD)

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr: 985 321 884

Jorunn Buli-Holmberg
Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
Universitetet i Oslo
Postboks 1140 Blindern
0318 OSLO

Vår dato: 08.08.2012 Vår ref:31084 / 3 / MAS Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 24.07.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

31084	*Role Perception of Support Pedagogues working with Children with Special Needs in Faroese Kindergartens*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Jorunn Buli-Holmberg*
Student	*Natascha Malang Johannesen*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, eventuelle kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/prosjektoversikt.jsp.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2013, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Mads Solberg

Mads Solberg tlf: 55 58 89 28
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Avdelingskontorer / *District Offices:*
OSLO: NSD. Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD. Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD. SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@sv.uit.no

Appendix 6: Permission (Dátueftirlitið)

Dátueftirlitið

Natascha Johannesen
[redacted]

Tórshavn, tann 21. september 2012
J. nr.: 20120159-2
Viðgjørt: js

Viðvíkjandi verkætlanini "Role perception of support pedagogues working with children with special needs in faroese kindergartens"

Dátueftirlitið fekk tann 13. september 2012 umsókn um loyvi at viðgera viðkvæmar upplýsingar frá tygum um verkætlan "Role perception of support pedagogues working with children with special needs in faroese kindergartens". Umsóknin er undirskrivað av Nataschu Johannesen.

Lýsing av verkætlanini
Endamálið við verkætlanini er at kanna og varpa ljós á hvussu stuðulspedagogar hjá børnum við serligum tørvi skilja sín leiklut, tá arbeitt verður við hesum børnum á dagstovninum. Verkætlanin vil serstakliga leggja dent á samstarvið millum stuðulspedagogar og annað starvsfólk á stovninum.

Upplýsingarnar verða savnaðar manuelt við samtykki frá skrásetta og skulu nýtast í omanfyri nevndu verkætlan, har tær skulu knýtast at upplýsingum um m.a heimsspekiliga sannføring. Upplýsingar um heimsspekiliga sannføring eru sambært § 2 í løgtingslóg nr. 73 frá 2001 um viðgerð av persónsupplýsingum við seinni broytingum (persónsupplýsingarlógin) viðkvæmar persónsupplýsingar, og til tess at kunna viðgera viðkvæmar persónsupplýsingar krevst sum høvuðsregla viðgerðarloyvi frá Dátueftirlitinum sbrt. § 35 í persónsupplýsingarlógini.

Viðgerðarloyvi
Sagt verður frá, at Dátueftirlitið við heimild í § 9, stk. 1 jf. § 10, stk. 1 nr. 1 og 9 í persónsupplýsingarlógini gevur loyvi til, at Natascha Johannesen kann viðgera viðkvæmar persónsupplýsingar í tilknýti til nevndu verkætlan.

Hetta viðgerðarloyvið er galdandi til 30. juni 2013.

Treytir
Viðgerðarloyvið er treytað av, at persónsupplýsingarnar bara verða nýttar til granskingarendamálið í hesari umsókn.

Loyvið er harumframt treytað av, at ásetingarnar í løgtingslóg nr. 73 frá 8. mai 2001 um viðgerð av persónsupplýsingum við seinni broytingum og kunngerð nr. 28 frá 27. februar 2003 um trygd í sambandi við viðgerð av persónsupplýsingum verða hildnar. Somuleiðis er loyvið treytað av, at hesar almennu treytir til verkætlanina verða hildnar.

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Dátueftirlitið

1. Almennar treytir
   1.1. Dátuábygdarin Natascha Johannesen hevur ábyrgdina av, at ásettu treytirnar verða fylgdar.
   1.2. Upplýsingarnar kunnu bert nýtast til at fremja hesa verkætlan.
   1.3. Viðgerðin kann bert gerast av dátuábyrgdaranum ella vegna dátuábyrgdara við ábyrgd mótvegis honum.
   1.4. Ein og hvør, sum viðger upplýsingar frá verkætlanini, skal vera kunnaður um ásettu treytirnar.
   1.5. Ásettu treytirnar eru eisini galdandi fyri dátuviðgera.
   1.6. Hølir, har upplýsingar frá verkætlanini verða goymdar og viðgjørdar, eiga at vera innrættaði soleiðis, at óviðkomandi ikki hava atgongd.
   1.7. Viðgerðin av upplýsingum eigur at fyriskipast soleiðis, at neyðugt eftirlit kann verða gjørt fyri at tryggja, at skeivar ella villleiðandi upplýsingar ikki verða viðgjørdar. Skeivar ella villeiðandi upplýsingar ella upplýsingar, sum verða viðgjørdar ólógliga ella stríða ímóti hesum treytum, skulu rættast ella strikast.
   1.8. Upplýsingar skulu ikki goymast við møguleika fyri at eyðmerkja tey skrásettu í longri tíð enn neyðugt er fyri at fremja verkætlanina.
   1.9. Um úrslit av kanningini verða almannakunngjørd, skal hetta gerast so, at ikki ber til at eyðmerkja einstaklingar.
   1.10 Um treytir eru ásettar í aðrari lóggávu, er fyritreytin, at tær vera hildnar.

2. Elektroniskar upplýsingar
   2.1. Eyðmerkingarupplýsingar eiga at bronglast ella dulmerkjast. Somuleiðis kunnu allar upplýsingarnar goymast bronglaðar. Brongullykil v.m. eigur at verða goymdur á tryggum stað og ikki saman við persónsupplýsingunum.
   2.2. Atgongd til upplýsingar frá verkætlanini eigur bert at kunna fáast, um loyniorð verður nýtt. Loyniorðið skal vera tøl og stórir og smáir bókstavir. Loyniorðið eigur at vera broytt annan hvønn mánaða og annars eftir umstøðunum.
   2.3. Tá ið upplýsingar, sum kunnu vísa til persónar, verða fluttar um internet ella annað uttanhýsis net, eiga neyðug trygdartiltøk at setast í verk sum tryggja, at óviðkomandi ikki fáa kunnleika til tær. Upplýsingarnar eiga í minsta lagi at bronglast forsvarliga undir øllum flutninginum. Tá flutt verður um innanhýsis net, eigur trygd at vera fyri, at óviðkomandi ikki fáa atgongd til upplýsingarnar.
   2.4. Leysir goymsluniðlar, trygdaravrit av dátum v.m. eiga at vera innlæst soleiðis, at tað ikki ber til hjá óviðkomandi at koma at upplýsingunum.

3. Manuellar upplýsingar
   3.1. Manuelt tilfar um verkætlanir, útskriftir, feil- og eftirlitslistar v.m., sum beinleiðis ella óbeinleiðis kunnu vísa til ávísar persónar, eiga at varðveitast við tí fyri eyga, at tað ikki ber til hjá óviðkomandi at fáa kunnleika um innihaldið.

4. Kunningarskylda til skrásetta
   4.1. Um upplýsingar verða savnaðar inn frá skrásetta (við viðtalu, spurnarblaði, viðgerð, eygleiðing v.m.) skal viðkomandi kunnast gjølla um verkætlanina. Skrásetti skal hava kunning um navn á dátuábyrgdara, endamálið við verkætlanini, at viðkomandi luttekur sjálvboðin og at samtykki altið kann takast aftur. Um upplýsingarnar verða viðarigivnar í sambandi við aðra vísindaliga ella hagtalsliga verkætlan, skal kunnast um endamál og hvør móttakarin er.

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4.2. Skrásetti eigur eisini at kunnast um, at verkætlanin er fráboðað Dátueftirlitinum sambært lóg um viðgerð av persónsupplýsingum, og at Dátueftirlitið hevur sett treytir fyri verkætlanini fyri at tryggja persónsvernd hins einstaka.

5. Viðarigeving
   5.1. Upplýsingar, sum vísa til persónar, kunnu bert gevast víðari til triðjapart til annað hagtalsligt ella vísindaligt endamál.
   5.2. Viðarigeving kann bert fara fram, um Dátueftirlitið hevur givið loyvi frammanundan.

6. Broytingar
   6.1. Týdningarmiklar broytingar í verkætlanini skulu fráboðast Dátueftirlitinum sum broyting til verandi fráboðan. Broytingar, sum ikki hava stóran týdning, kunnu fráboðast Dátueftirlitinum.
   6.2. Broytingar av tíðarætlan fyri, nær verkætlanin verður liðug, skulu altíð fráboðast Dátueftirlitinum.

7. Tá verkætlanin er liðug
   7.1. Upplýsingar eiga at strikast, navnloynast ella fyribeinast í seinasta lagi, tá ið verkætlanin endar, fyri at seinni ikki skal kunna bera til at eyðmerkja einstaklingar, sum eru við í kanningini.
   7.2. Í øðrum lagi kunnu upplýsingar latast Landsskjalasavninum í varðveitslu sambært reglunum í lóg um Føroya Landsskjalasavn.
   7.3. Dátuábyrgdari eigur at boða Dátueftirlitinum frá, tá ið verkætlanin er liðug og upplýsingarnar eru strikaðar, navnloyndar, fyribeindar ella latnar Landsskjalasavninum.
   7.4. Tá ið upplýsingar frá elektroniskum miðlum verða strikaðar, skal ikki verða møguligt at endurskapa tær.

Vegna Dátueftirlitið

Janus Hentze í Stórustovu
fulltrúi

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